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BackTrack

RECORDING BRITAIN'S RAILWAY HISTORY

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- BRITAIN'S RAILWAYS AT WAR
- CREWE — AT HOME & AWAY
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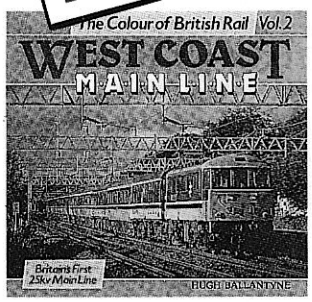

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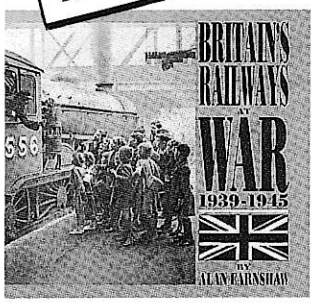

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Backtrack

RECORDING BRITAIN'S RAILWAY HISTORY

Vol.3 No.2 April-June 1989

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CHANGE OF DRIVER II

In steam days, when a fresh crew took over the footplate on a through working, the first question always asked by the new driver was 'How's she running?', the which while, his fireman would lift the flap and examine the state of the fire. Funnily enough, this picturesque analogy is by no means inappropriate for me as the new man in charge of BACKTRACK. It needed but a cursory glance for me to realise that 'she' was running well with a fire in good heart and a tender well filled with good steam coal. Let me therefore re-assure all of you that there will be no fundamental changes to the form or philosophy of this journal under my direction; indeed, if you had noticed no significant difference in the basic layout of this issue until you read the above words, we have already succeeded in our first aim.

BACKTRACK until now has been very much the inspiration and creation of one man, Nigel Trevena, and I am sure readers will share his disappointment that, largely through health reasons, he can no longer mastermind 'his' magazine; but I was flattered and pleased to respond to his personal wish that it should be me who took over if possible. The idea goes back to mid-1988 when, in a discussion of my possible future contributions to BACKTRACK, I inadvertently let slip the fact that I was hoping to retire early from the National Railway Museum in order to concentrate on writing. I had not expected Nigel's reaction quite taking the form it did; but he was quite adamant — so here I am!

However, pursuing the footplate analogy, no two drivers ever treated the engine in quite the same way, so even allowing that our destination is still the same and the trailing load has not changed in any vital respect, my 'handling of the regulator' is bound to be slightly different from Nigel's. For one thing, I am a railway historian whereas Nigel is firstly a graphic designer — hence the very fine production values established for both this magazine and, let it be said, the whole of Atlantic's range of transport books. These values I shall do my best to maintain and improve, given the magnificent start offered by Nigel, but I shall also try to make a specific input in my own particular area of interest. Readers may therefore expect occasional historical articles from me as well as a regular editorial comment. But the 'train' is still running to the same schedule, and those who have supported BACKTRACK in its early years need have no fears that I shall change either its basic composition or its route!

FUTURE THOUGHTS

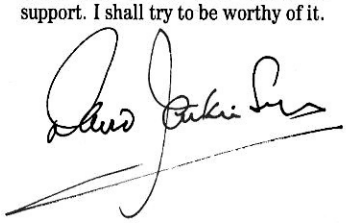
One of the most encouraging aspects of BACKTRACK is the extent to which you, the readers, have made it obvious that you regard it as *your* magazine and woe betide us if we depart from our chosen path! You may therefore take it for granted that we shall go on canvassing your views and encouraging your letters on any aspect of the magazine. It would be a minor miracle if there were not some mutually contradictory opinions but we shall, over a period of time, try to ensure that all the major demands are met.

For this reason, we have included (on page 92) a brief statement of some of the possible areas of debate where we invite your further collaboration. We have not put it in the form of a questionnaire (we are still analysing the earlier ones!); this time we would like your written comments and the more we get, the better we should be able to please you.

. . . AND AN IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

In the meantime, it falls to me to announce a change which should not need preliminary endorsement: with effect from the next issue and by popular request, BACKTRACK becomes a bi-monthly magazine! There will be revised subscription details, of course, and these are given on page 95 along with details of other administration changes.

I can think of no greater tribute to our first editor than to be able to make this announcement so soon after I have taken over; it was always Nigel's intention to build up to this frequency and I am happy to acknowledge the fact. There will, naturally, be a period of transition, but in practical terms it means that although by the end of 1989, Volume 3 will only contain five issues, the new regular two-monthly interval will have been established on the correct bi-monthly cycle. Meantime, thank you all for your continued support. I shall try to be worthy of it.



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TOP: Schools Class 4-4-0 30915 *Brighton* specially groomed to take the four car Pullman Royal Train to Tattenham Corner on Derby Day, 6th June 1953. At that time Richard Hardy was shedmaster at Stewarts Lane which ensured a brilliant finish, even to a black engine. From 1956 the Schools Class was repainted in BR green, only four engines failing to be so treated before withdrawal.

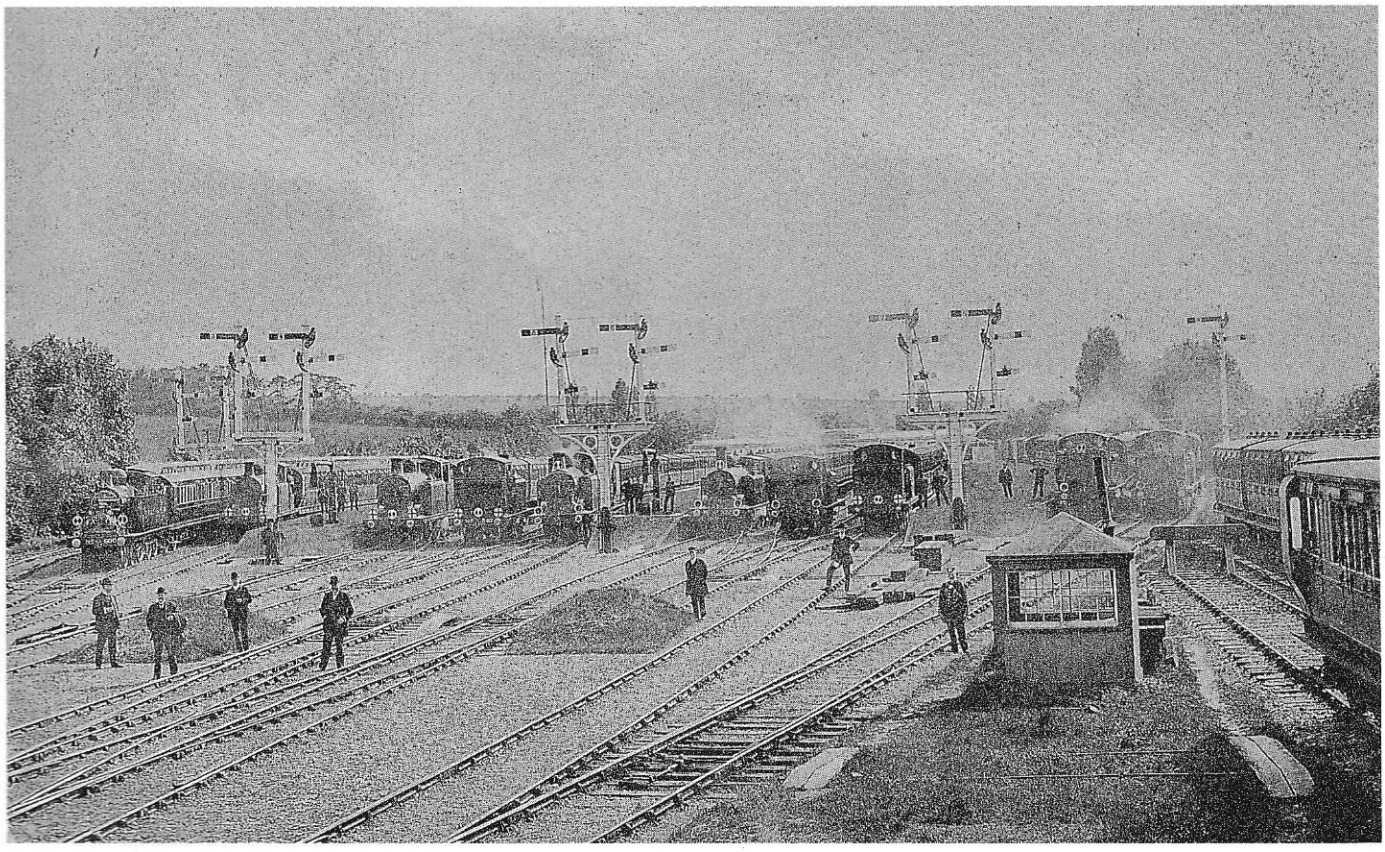
Photo: J. G. Click/NRM Collection

Royal race train duties

BOTTOM: Schools Class 4-4-0 30926 *Repton* waits at Tattenham Corner before proceeding with the empty coaches of the Derby Day Royal Train from Victoria, the Royal Party returning to London by road. Next to the engine is the Pullman car *Isle of Thanet* with the Royal Saloon immediately behind. Note the highly polished buffers and couplings which were retained at Stewarts Lane for fitting on such occasions: a June 1962 picture.

Photo: Roy Hobbs

BY SOUTHERN TO THE RACES



Epsom Downs station (LB&SCR) on Derby Day. The train on the extreme left is the LB&SCR Royal Train probably waiting for HM King Edward VII.
Photo: Author's collection

J.W. KIRKBY *The author describes the arrangements made when anyone who was anyone went to the races by train.*

For the pre-grouping railways horse racing was big business. In the days before mass car ownership the potential was considerable with a high proportion of first class travel and all the main line railways set out to cater for the traffic in a big way.

During the time of the Big Four, of the major events the LNER had Doncaster (St Leger) and Newmarket, the LMSR had Aintree (Grand National), Haydock Park and Ayr, while the GWR served Cheltenham (Gold Cup) and Newbury. There were, and still are, many other smaller courses scattered around the country in places, from a railway point of view, off the beaten track e.g. Towcester, Market Rasen, Wincanton, etc.

The SR on the other hand had 18 race courses within 85 miles of the metropolis; excluding Portsmouth and Salisbury, which were not recorded, the number of passengers conveyed by all trains to race meetings in 1937 was 464,623 divided as follows:

Ascot	23,670
Brighton	54,621
Epsom	113,912
Eridge	1,025
Folkestone	9,098
Fontwell Park	1,840
Gatwick	23,076
Goodwood	7,927
Hurst Park	61,947
Kempton Park	75,228
Lewes	13,824
Lingfield	18,053
Plumpton	4,517
Sandown Park	44,922
Windsor	9,730
Wye	1,223

These figures do not give an indication of the volume of traffic on any one day as the number of meetings at each location varied. Apart from racegoers, there were also large numbers of Police and Tote staff to be transported. Before, during and after each meeting there was a considerable volume of horse box traffic, much of it to and from other railways, principally the LNER via the East London line or Metropolitan Widened Lines and to the GWR via Reading.

One of the major problems in handling large numbers of racegoers was that whereas the outward journeys would be spread over the whole morning, at the conclusion of racing, usually around 4.30 pm, everyone wanted to get home at once, requiring an intensive service of return trains, mainly to London, arriving at the London termini slap in the middle of the evening commuter peak.

In recalling these special facilities it is best to consider each section of the SR separately as the sections tended to follow closely the practices of the former pre-grouping railway, LSWR, LB&SCR or SE&CR.

N Class 2-6-0 1863 south of Chipstead with a Pullman race special on a pre-war Derby Day. Photo: Author's collection

Western Section

Salisbury, Windsor and Hampton Court stations all had sufficient room to handle race traffic without additional facilities. At Portsmouth, a new halt was constructed at Paulsgrove, between Cosham and Portchester, and opened on 28th June 1933 solely for race traffic. On race days most local trains called there and there was one special from Waterloo at 11.40 am calling at Surbiton, Guildford and Petersfield which was stabled at Fareham while the locomotive went to Fratton shed for servicing. The cost from Waterloo including admission was 16/- (80p) first class and 11/6d (57½p) second class return. Lunch was available on the outward journey for 2/6d (12½p).

Kempton Park Races were usually held on Bank Holidays, including Boxing Day. The LSWR built a special race station for the course between Hampton and Sunbury with down and up line platforms, an up bay platform and docks for horse traffic. There were also long loop sidings on either side of the running lines between Kempton Park and Sunbury. Additional signal boxes were situated at Fulwell Cutting, between Fulwell and Hampton, at Mark Hole and at Hanworth between Hampton and Kempton Park. These and the signal box at Kempton Park were generally open on race days only although Kempton Park was opened for goods traffic to the Metropolitan Water Board siding as required.

On Easter Monday 5th April 1926, between 9.30 am and 1.00 pm, apart from the seven booked electric services from Waterloo to Shepperton via Kingston, there were 18 electric specials most of which ran non-stop to Kempton Park. In addition there were 15 steam specials of which three started from Clapham Junction and two from Wimbledon. Nine of the starters from Waterloo were first class or 'Members Only' and most ran via Richmond.

The electric services up to mid-day returned empty either to Waterloo for a second trip or to Durnsford Road while the steam trains were berthed at Hampton or Sunbury. After the 12.12 pm service from Shepperton to Waterloo had passed, single line working was introduced over the down line between Sunbury and Shepperton so that race trains could be berthed one behind the other on the up line ready for return. Tablet instruments were available in both Sunbury and Shepperton signal boxes for this purpose, and it was the responsibility of the Telegraph Superintendent to make the switch from double to single line working at the appropriate time and to restore double line working after the last up race train had been cleared, usually about 8.00 pm. Both Sunbury and Kempton Park stations were used for return race specials.

As time passed the first class travel declined so more electric specials were run and fewer steam trains.

Traffic for Sandown Park was handled at Esher where special trains from Waterloo were unloaded in the down main or down local platforms. There were two special race platforms for return traffic, one of which faced against the up local line.

One or two trains would be berthed at Esher, most ran on empty to Woking, Weybridge or the Chertsey line to run round and return. They were then berthed in close order on the up local line between Walton up local starting signal and Esher West up local home signal ready for return.

Until 1937 these trains were steam hauled, the usual motive power being Class M7 0-4-4Ts although Class A12 0-4-2 and Class K10 and L11 4-4-0s were also sometimes used on both Kempton Park and Esher race specials. There was a turntable at Shepperton until 1942 and turning facilities were available at Woking and via the Addlestone triangle.

The meetings at Ascot were a very different proposition as special trains were run not only from Waterloo and Reading but from all over the SR and from other railways.

The facilities at Ascot consisted of the main station with five platforms, three for the Reading line and two for the Bagshot line. Signalling was controlled by three signal boxes, Ascot East, West and South, although the latter was reduced in status to a ground frame in 1928. West of the station serving the up Reading line was a Race platform and nearly one mile further on was Ascot West station with up and down platforms, crossovers and horse docks, open for passengers only on race days.

On race days normal passenger services would be suspended for most of the day. Special facing crossovers would be installed and all down trains for Ascot or the Reading line would be run into No.1 platform to minimise use of the subway and assist in dispersing the crowds. This arrangement applied from about 8.00 am until 2.00 pm and in the up direction a similar crossover at the western end of the station allowed up trains to use No.2 platform over the same period. Special calling-on arms were placed on the relevant home signal posts and throughout most of the day the working between Ascot East and West boxes was mainly controlled by hand signalmen under the overall charge of a Signalling Inspector. In addition, signal boxes at Knowle East and West, between Ascot and Virginia Water would be opened specially.

Once the race traffic began in earnest, around 10.30 am, the train working at Ascot became divided into three quite separate activities. Ascot main station platforms 1 to 3 handled the trains from the London direction. Taking Wednesday 16th June 1937 as an example, on that day there was one train from the LMS via Willesden and one from Ramsgate via Factory Junction and Clapham Junction. From Waterloo there was one Tote special, six first and third class specials plus thirteen first class only specials, two of

Hurst Park Races: Whit Monday, 6th June 1960. These return race specials (Headcode 94) in Hampton Court station are formed from 4SUB and 4EPB stock. Photo: J. N. Faulkner

Ascot Races: 17th June 1953. A return special from Ascot to Waterloo via Frimley and Woking passing Surbiton behind 4-6-2 34011 *Tavistock*. Photo: J. N. Faulkner

which were provided with dining cars. There was no third class departure from Waterloo between 10.34 am and 12.23 pm.

The first four arrivals returned empty to Sunningdale or Virginia Water to form passenger trains to Staines or Waterloo after which those which could not be accommodated at Ascot were berthed in close order on the up line between Ascot and Sunningdale. Three normal passenger trains were then run: 12.54 pm Waterloo to Reading; 2.00 pm and 3.02 pm Reading to Waterloo. After the first of these had passed, the empty trains were transferred to the down line to allow the other two to pass where they were joined by down afternoon passenger trains from Waterloo or Staines which were terminated at Sunningdale.

The first return special left Ascot at 4.33 pm conveying first class passengers only, as did the next twelve. Four of these left from the Race platform, and between 5.06 pm and 5.54 pm there were departures every four minutes. The first train conveying third class passengers left at 5.46 pm, although there were departures via Bagshot and Woking at 4.43 pm and 5.21 pm. In order to ease congestion at Waterloo (Windsor side), eight return specials were routed via Virginia Water west curve and Weybridge to run into Waterloo (Main).

Of necessity, a number of returning race specials formed outward evening services from Waterloo, and home going commuters would be surprised to find themselves travelling home in a train composed entirely of first class carriages; others to Windsor would be even more surprised to find their normal electric train replaced by a steam train.

The second area of working was at Ascot West which handled all the horse box traffic plus twelve excursions, one each from Sandwich, Brighton and Eastbourne via Redhill and reversing at Wokingham, three from Reading SR, four from the GWR via Reading with two from the LNER via Banbury and Reading. These trains all called at Bracknell for ticket collection, then after discharging their passengers at Ascot West where one was stabled, all the others returned empty to Reading, except one which was berthed at Bracknell.

For the return they were brought empty from Reading, with the locomotives running tender first to Bracknell, where the trains were run round and propelled one behind the other on to the up line between Bracknell and Ascot West in order of departure.

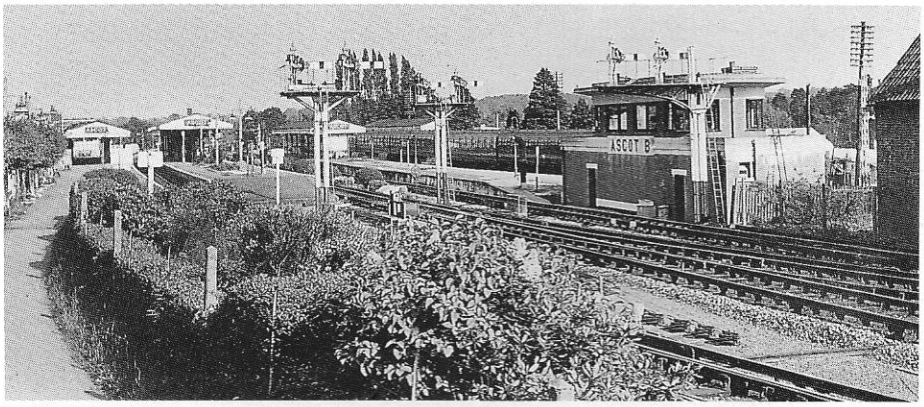
As a result ordinary passengers using Bracknell station on race days had a hard time. After the 10.24 am up train, there was no other until 2.23 pm, followed by another long gap between 3.24 pm and 6.25 pm. On the down line there was only one service from Waterloo or Staines between 9.32 am and 5.34 pm, at 12.54 pm.

The third group of trains used the two branch platforms (Nos.4 and 5) at Ascot. Local services at Woking or Farnham were reduced, and eight specials worked in from Bournemouth, Poole, Salisbury, Plymouth, Portsmouth Harbour (via Woking), Wimbledon (2) and Alton. These were worked out empty and berthed at Woking, Byfleet, Frimley, Aldershot and Farnborough. In the afternoon they returned to Bagshot and were arranged in close order on the down line between Bagshot and Ascot South.

In the early years of the Southern Railway, race specials on the Western Section carried an identification letter, but in later years this was changed to the more normal Southern practice of carrying an identification number.

The layout at Ascot was modified in 1938 preparatory to electrification after which different working arrangements applied.

Ascot station: 16th May 1954, from the path leading to the up side race platform used for return specials conveying Royal Enclosure spectators. Photo: J. N. Faulkner



Return race special ex-Wye approaching Ashford c.1923. Photo: Lens of Sutton

Eastern Section

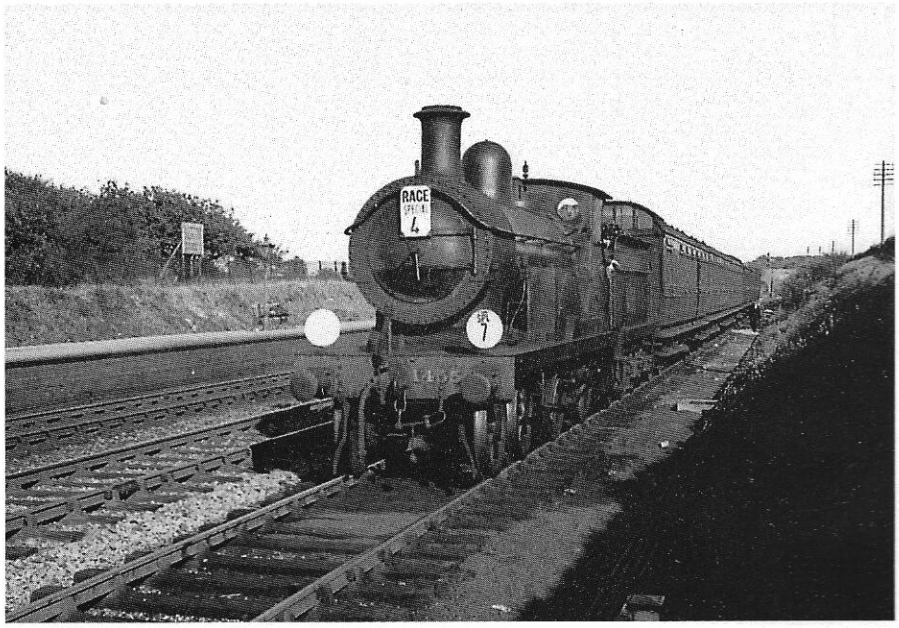
The Eastern Section of the SR, apart from Tattenham Corner which will be described later along with Epsom Downs, was not much involved with race traffic. The two courses at Wye and Westenhanger were on different routes but only a few miles apart.

At Wye there was a Race platform serving the up line only, separated from the up platform at Wye station by a level crossing. Usually two special trains were run from Victoria, one conveying third class passengers, the other with Pullman Cars and first class carriages only. The Pullman special returned from the Race platform, while the third class train waited behind it in Wye station.

As usual on the longer journeys, racegoers were well refreshed. Luncheon and light refreshments were served in the Pullman Cars on the down journey, tea and light refreshments on the return. For those not fortunate enough to travel Pullman, cold luncheon baskets at 5/- (25p) could be supplied at Tonbridge on the outward journey provided prior advice with remittance was sent to the Refreshment Manager. For the return, Tea baskets were available at Wye for 1/3d (6p) each.

At Westenhanger a special racecourse station was situated about ¼ mile west of the main station, it had platforms serving both up and down lines with loops either side. Folkestone Races as they were known was a bigger event than Wye and apart from additional stops in ordinary trains, usually justified four special trains. A Pullman special and first class only special ran from Victoria and used the Racecourse station, while a third class special from Victoria and a first and third class special from London Bridge via East Croydon and Redhill used Westenhanger station.

B1 Class 4-4-0 1455 on race special (for Tonbridge and Redhill) at Westenhanger in September 1937. Photo: R. F. Roberts



Central Section

The Central Section had more race days annually than either of the other two but differences in the marketing approach were as a result of the practices of the former Companies. Whereas the LSWR had given a high priority to first class racegoers, the LB&SCR and SE&CR had catered much more for ordinary racegoers travelling third class; but because Pullman Cars were a feature of ordinary working for both these companies one or more Pullman specials were run to most race meetings. In addition, a limited number of first class only specials were provided for members of the Racecourse associations and others requiring this facility.

The smallest race meeting on the Central section was Eridge Bona Fide Hunt Steeplechases held on Easter Monday, the only railway provision being special fares and additional carriages on ordinary trains.

Races at Fontwell Park, situated

between Arundel and Chichester were also usually a Bank Holiday event. Barnham was the nearest station from which the Southdown Motor Services ran a service to the racecourse for a fare of 1/- (5p) each way.

The facilities at Barnham were well able to handle the traffic, most of which passed on ordinary trains in the special Bank Holiday service. One race train ran from Victoria, conveying first and third class Pullman Cars calling at Clapham Junction and East Croydon. The special pamphlet issued quoted fares to Barnham from Tunbridge Wells and Eastbourne in the east, Southampton and Winchester in the west and from suburban stations between London and Croydon.

Brighton Races was a popular event and prior to electrification in 1933 the usual arrangement was for five special trains from London Bridge, another five from Victoria and a west coast special from Chichester all conveying both first and third class passengers. Pullman passengers travelled on a strengthened 'Southern Belle'. The frequent electric service from 1933 onward reduced the need for special working to two or three trains only.

Lewes, Plumpton, Gatwick and Lingfield were the 'bread and butter' meetings of the Central section. Held at frequent intervals throughout the year they were patronised mainly by the racing fraternity, those for whom racing was either a hobby, a consuming interest or a livelihood. A Pullman special from Victoria ran to all these meetings and a Members first class only train ran to Gatwick and Lingfield. Several first and third class ordinary special trains ran from Victoria to all four meetings and in the case of Gatwick and Lingfield there was also one from London Bridge.

A special train was also run from Brighton to all four of these meetings. The Plumpton train ran via Lewes while the Lingfield train ran via Ardingly calling at Haywards Heath and East Grinstead. Pullman facilities were included on both the Gatwick and Lingfield trains from Brighton and one could make the ten minute journey from East Grinstead to Lingfield in a third class Pullman for a supplement of one shilling while, if really rash, first class Pullman facilities could be enjoyed for 1/6d (7½p)!

At Brighton the facilities capable of handling a Summer Bank Holiday invasion were more than adequate for up to a dozen or so race trains. Lewes too, coped without any special facilities, making use of the East Sidings marshalling yard during a normally quiet period. At Plumpton, a race platform adjacent to the up line was situated immediately on the London side of the station. There were separate starting signals for each and the Pullman and ordinary race specials would be drawn up one behind the other, the former occupying the race platform.

At Gatwick, the LB&SCR had built a large station with five platforms serving all four running lines and with a down main loop. There was access via a long crossover from the down main loop and from both up lines into a group of four sidings on the up side where special race trains were berthed while their locomotives went to Three Bridges for turning and servicing. There were additional sidings on the down side at the country end of the station. Racing at Gatwick was not revived after the Second World War and the racecourse is now submerged beneath the international airport and the station has been changed out of all recognition.

LINGFIELD PARK RACES

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 15th, 1938.

FIRST RACE 2-0 p.m., LAST RACE 4-30 p.m.

Stakes Value over £2,400.

RACE TRAINS for above Meeting as follows:—

From LONDON

Victoria (Central Section) dep.	A.M. 11-40	A.M. —	P.M. 12-3a	P.M. 12-8	P.M. 12-10b	P.M. 12-40	RETURN 1st Class	FARES. 3rd Class
Clapham Junction "	—	11-36c	—	11-56c	—	12-36c		
Balham "	—	11-41c	—	12-1c	—	12-41c	7/6	5/-
London Bridge (Central Section) "	—	11-44	—	12-0c	—	12-35c		
New Cross Gate "	—	11-50	—	12-5c	—	12-29c		
East Croydon "	—	12-3	—	12-26	—	1-0	6/6	4/-
Lingfield arr.	12-24	12-32	12-47	1-14	12-55	1-30	—	—

To LONDON.

Lingfield dep.	P.M. 4-55b	P.M. 5-0a	P.M. 5-6	P.M. 5-12	P.M. 5-18	
East Croydon arr.	—	—	5-36	5-48	5-50	
New Cross Gate "	—	—	—	5-55	—	
London Bridge (Central Section) "	—	—	5-45	6-2	—	
Balham "	—	—	5-50	—	—	
Clapham Junction "	—	—	5-57	—	—	
Victoria (Central Section) "	5-43	5-48	—	—	6-6	

A 1st Class Pullman Cars only.

a Members' Train 1st Class only.

c Change at East Croydon.

Hastings dep. 11-5 a.m., Eastbourne 11-36 a.m., Lewes 11-57 a.m. (Change at Haywards Heath), Brighton 12-15c p.m., Haywards Heath 12-32 p.m., East Grinstead 12-57 p.m., Lingfield arr. 1-7 p.m.

From the SOUTH.

Polegate 11-29 a.m. (Change at Bristol).

Returning from Lingfield at 4-58 p.m., except where return train leaves at 5-16 p.m.

c First and Third Class Pullman Cars will run in this Train. Supplementary charge 1/6 and 1/- respectively in each direction.

RETURN TRAINS:—For Oxted 4-17 and 5-27 p.m.; For Grange Road, Rowfant and Three Bridges (via East Grinstead) 5-16 p.m.

N.B.—The Southern Railway Company do not represent or guarantee that Racing will, or will not, take place.

CHARGES TO STANDS:—Reserved Enclosure 22/6 including Tax; Public Enclosure 6/- including Tax.

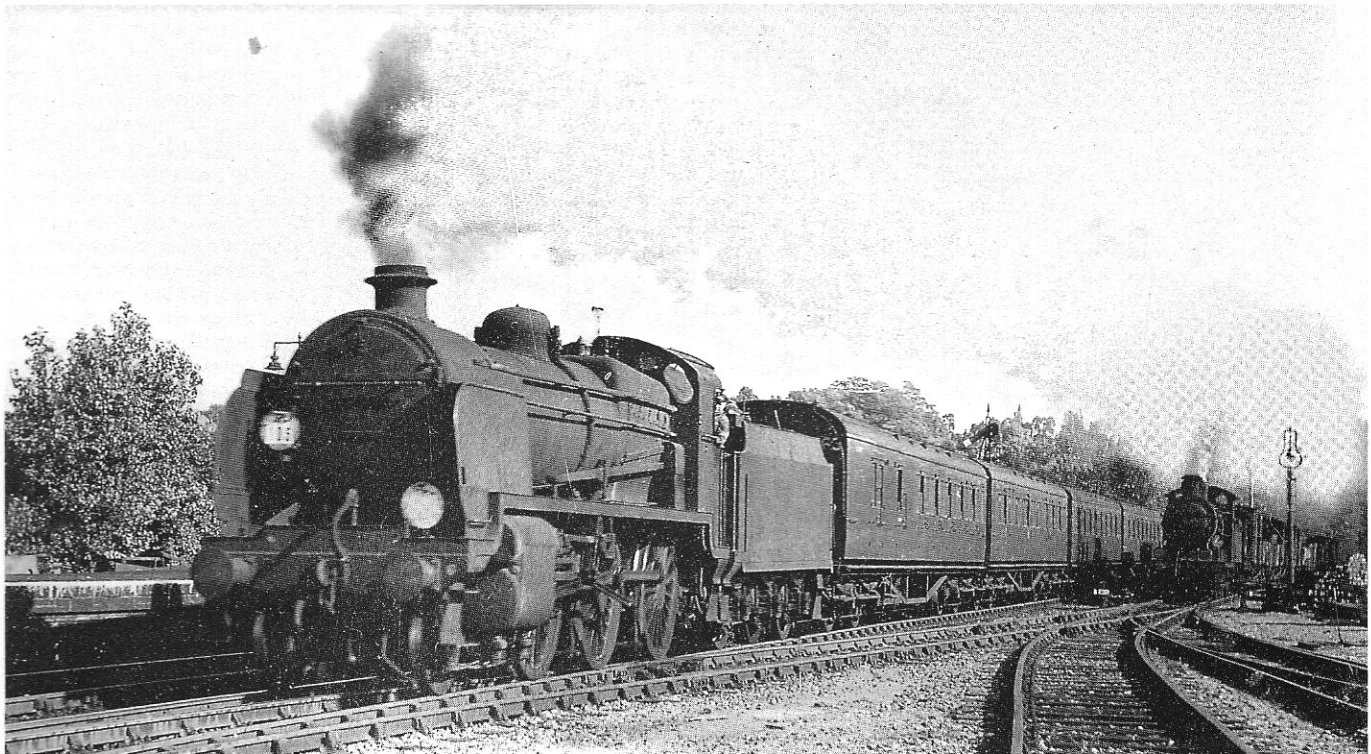
Ladies will be admitted to the Club on payment of 22/6 including Tax, Gentlemen 44/6 including Tax, on introduction by a Member.

Secretary and Clerk of the Course, Mr. F. W. WILMOT, Lingfield, Surrey.

15-9-38.

Printed by Pearl & Co., Beddon Street, Regent Street, W.1.

Oxted: 12th August 1949. N Class 2-6-0 1410 is seen with the 4.43 pm Lingfield-Victoria race special. Photo: S. C. Nash



Lingfield on the other hand survived and flourished but changed little over the years. The station had a down loop for the reception of down race specials and for the despatch of down line specials afterwards. Some up line departures were despatched from the two long dock platforms on the up side which were signalled for up departures. Locomotives used on Lingfield race specials would be sent to East Grinstead to turn, running either via St Margarets Junction, East Grinstead High Level and the connecting spur to the Low Level station and back to Lingfield or vice versa. To minimise the number of locomotives requiring to be turned in this way the locomotive which worked the special up from Brighton usually returned with a special to London and a London locomotive would work the return train to Brighton. Although Class I3 4-4-2Ts were occasionally seen on Lingfield special trains the usual motive power in SR days were 2-6-0s: Classes N, U or U1.

SOUTHERN RAILWAY

LEWES RACES

AUGUST 7th and 8th

CHEAP TICKETS BY SPECIAL TRAINS From London

RETURN TRAINS LEAVE LEWES AT —

TICKETS OBTAINABLE IN ADVANCE AT STATIONS AND AGENCIES

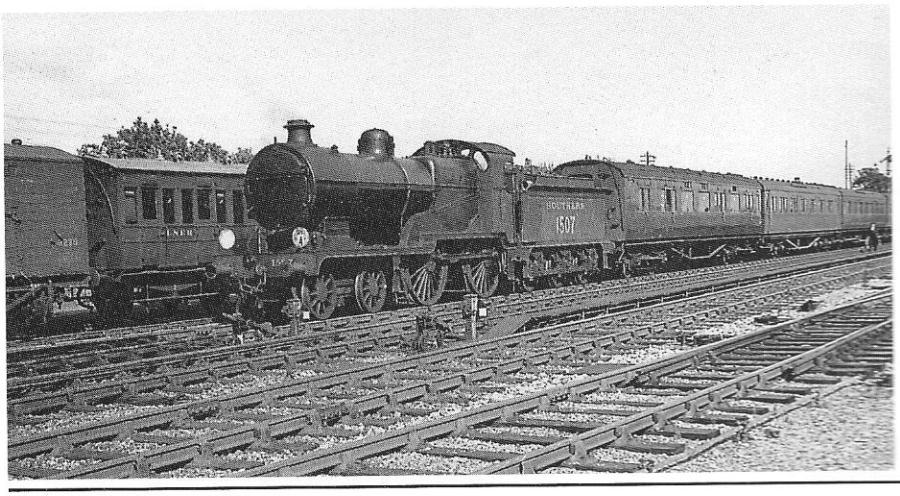
The Southdown Motor Services Ltd will run a service of Buses between Lewes Station and the Course. Fare 1/- each way.

The most fashionable meeting of the racing calendar on the Central section was 'Glorious Goodwood'. With the racecourse amid panoramic scenery high up on the South Downs behind Chichester the main meeting featured in the social events of the time following Ascot, Wimbledon and Henley at the end of July.

The nearest station was Singleton, where, on the single line which ran from Midhurst to Chichester, the LB&SCR had built a magnificent station with two large island platforms, two signal boxes, extensive docks and sidings, a large goods shed and a locomotive turntable and watering facilities. The station included large waiting rooms, a refreshment room, extensive toilet facilities, nearly all of it used only on four days each year. The South Box was manned only on race days and alternate Wednesdays (Chichester Market days) and both boxes were closed in 1933 after which all Goodwood race traffic was handled at Chichester.

A Special Traffic Notice for 1931 shows that the local rail motor service was suspended on race days from around 10.00 am until 2.00 pm. Ten special trains were run, two from Victoria via Petworth, one from Brighton via Chichester, four from Portsmouth and one from Romsey also via Chichester while two were local to the branch. There was also an all-Pullman special which left Victoria at 11.00 am but this was dealt with at Chichester because the load exceeded the maximum of eight bogie vehicles permitted on the branch line.

The 5.20 pm Lingfield-Victoria race special climbing towards Oxted Lime siding behind L1 Class 4-4-0 31787. A 12th August 1949 picture. Photo: S. C. Nash



E1 Class 4-4-0 1507 at Westenhanger on 1st class special train from Folkestone races to Victoria. A September 1937 picture. Photo: R. F. Roberts

Derby Day and all that

Finally we come to Epsom races and in particular, the Derby. The first 'Derby' was run on 4th May 1780 and it was another sixty years before people could travel to Epsom racecourse by train and even then to a point no nearer than Stoat's Nest on the London and Brighton railway or near Surbiton on the London and Southampton railway. Both involved a long walk to Epsom.

The LB&SCR reached Epsom in 1847 and the Epsom Downs branch, built largely for race traffic, was opened in 1865. The L&SWR had, in the meantime, also reached Epsom in 1859 but the SE&CR did not get a look in until the Chipstead Valley Railway from Purley was opened through to Tattenham Corner station in 1901; all three constituent companies of the SR then became involved in the Derby Day operation.

On Derby Day 1933 for instance, between 8.30 am and 2.00 pm, there were 52 arrivals at Epsom Downs of which six were worked by steam. The latter were two all-Pullman specials, both double headed, three first class only specials and Lord Derby's private special train. The turntable at Epsom Downs was put out of use in 1931 after which steam specials were worked by tank engines usually Class I3 4-4-2Ts assisted as necessary by Class E5 0-6-2Ts or Class H 0-4-4Ts.

At Tattenham Corner during the same period there were 54 arrivals including eight worked by steam. The latter were an all-Pullman special from Charing Cross, another from Cannon Street plus excursions from Gillingham, Sittingbourne, Canterbury West, Ramsgate, Sandwich via Tonbridge and

Hastings via Tunbridge Wells — all reversing at London Bridge where turnover locomotives were provided. Between London Bridge and Tattenham Corner these steam trains were usually hauled by Class L or L1 4-4-0s or Class N or N1 2-6-0s.

At Epsom station the special working consisted of special trains from Chichester via Horsham, Portsmouth via Haslemere and three or four from the GWR via Reading and Guildford — these latter would run empty to Clapham Yard for stabling and servicing.

Until more recent times most railways retained old rolling stock in reserve for special occasions and when the whole Derby operation was steam worked just about every available vehicle would be pressed into service. With electric working from 1928 such reserves of electric stock did not exist and although full use would be made of those units which normally stood idle between the morning and evening peaks, many ordinary services would be cancelled to provide for additional trains to Epsom Downs or Tattenham Corner. Most of the Victoria-Epsom trains would be diverted to Epsom Downs thus reducing the service between Sutton and Epsom by some 50%.

Under both steam and electric working, first and third class passengers were conveyed on most trains. On electric trains four first class compartments were kept locked in the rear unit of each train from Charing Cross or London Bridge to Tattenham Corner and from London Bridge or Victoria to Epsom Downs for the exclusive use of passengers with first class tickets. The instruction also ruled that if any of these compartments was unoccupied on arrival at East Croydon or Sutton, staff there could unlock them and allow third class passengers in. Inevitably there was a lot of out of class travel on these occasions but most of it was overlooked in the interest of clearing the crowds. Pick-pockets and card-sharpers usually had a field day on these occasions and suitable warnings were exhibited at stations.

Between the wars and afterwards the railways did not have a monopoly of the race traffic as an almost continuous service of omnibuses, literally at intervals of seconds, ran between Morden Underground station and the racecourse.

The Royal Family usually attended both the Derby and Ascot. In the latter case they travelled by road from nearby Windsor Castle but for the Derby, up to and including 1924 they travelled by Royal Train from Victoria to Epsom Downs. In 1925 they went by road and continued to do so until increasing traffic forced them to go back to using the Royal Train, but thereafter they were routed from Victoria to Tattenham Corner.

The facilities at both Epsom Downs and Tattenham Corner were commensurate with the size of the operation but only on the one day of the year were they fully extended.

The Epsom Downs branch was built as double track to accommodate the race traffic and it was over 40 years before the local traffic on the branch had grown sufficiently to justify it. Epsom Downs station had nine platforms with engine release roads between platforms 3 and 4, and also 5 & 6. There were carriage sidings, a 42ft locomotive turntable, coal stage and tank house with water columns at the north end of platforms 3 to 6 and in the carriage sidings. There were also special first class waiting rooms.

Class I3 4-4-2T 2091 south of Belmont with a Pullman race special for Epsom Downs on 19th April 1939. Photo: Author

The three signal boxes on the branch, Belmont, Banstead and Epsom Downs were supplemented in 1901/2 by intermediate signal boxes A, B and C between each of the others. These were only brought into use on race days and the signal arms which had no spectacle glasses or lamps because they were only used in daytime, were fixed to the posts during the weekend prior to the meeting and removed afterwards. In later SR years these signals were only put up for the Summer meeting. On these occasions Epsom Downs was provided with an additional outer home signal and altogether there would be nineteen stop signals on the down line and sixteen on the up line over the four miles between Sutton and Epsom Downs. The headway margins afforded were so small that the writer has stood on the up platform at Belmont on race days and seen three down trains in view at one time.

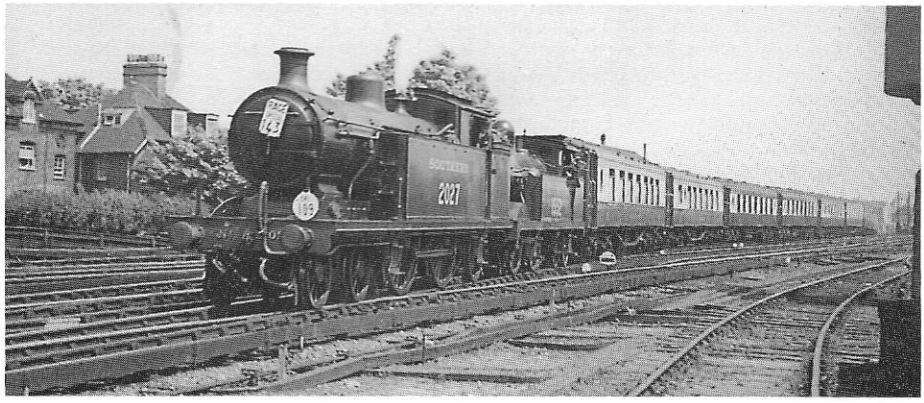
As usual, local traffic suffered on race days. Freight traffic in the suburban area was virtually brought to a standstill mainly because of pathing problems but under steam operation many of the locomotives and enginemen were required for working special race trains or empty stock. During steam operation also the local branch Rail Motor service was suspended between about 8.45 am until around 6.30 pm; very few trains served Belmont or Banstead in between times.

The first train to Epsom Downs on Derby Day was always the Battersea Tool Van, the locomotive being used thereafter for shunting steam stock. The next trains which left Victoria around 6.30 am conveyed some 600 policemen. Under steam operation this train was always double headed, the locomotives being used as shunting pilots at Epsom Downs. A stand-by locomotive was provided at Sutton for emergencies — very necessary in steam days as instances of locomotives becoming overpowered by their heavy trains on the 1 in 90 from Carshalton up to Sutton or on the 1 in 60 rising gradient between Belmont and Banstead were not uncommon.

For the return working in the afternoon, down passenger trains from 3.00 pm onward would be terminated at Banstead and together with other empty trains from stabling points would be queued head to tail between Banstead and Epsom Downs.

One of the major problems of returning Derby Day race traffic was that until 1925 there was no direct

Class I3 4-4-2T 2027 pilots H Class 0-4-4T 1552 with eight Pullman cars passing Sutton on its way to Epsom Downs on Derby Day Wednesday 24th May 1939. Photo: Author



connection at Sutton between the up Epsom Downs branch line and the West Croydon line. All traffic from Epsom Downs had to cross the down line from Hackbridge in direct conflict with late afternoon expresses to Portsmouth and commuter trains to Cheam, Epsom and beyond. In 1925 the layout at Sutton

was altered to give independent running from the Epsom Downs branch to the West Croydon, similar to that already existing for the down line which gave some easement but the working was further complicated by the opening in 1930 of the Wimbledon to Sutton line.

Turning now to Tattenham Corner, this station was opened just in time for the Derby of 1901: another large station with six platforms, an engine release road between each pair, three signal boxes, extensive sidings and a 54′ 10″ locomotive turntable. A limited passenger service ran daily to and from Tattenham Corner until 1907 but from then until electrification in 1928 the station was normally only used for passengers on race days and for 'Derby Sunday' — the Sunday before the Summer race meeting when there were traditionally fairs and other jollifications on Epsom Downs.

During Derby week, as on the Epsom Downs branch, additional signalling was installed and intermediate signal boxes opened at Tunnel, between Tattenham Corner and Tadworth, Chipstead Intermediate between Kingswood and Chipstead and at Woodmansterne from the date of its opening in 1932. Prior to 1932 there was a box known as Asylum between Chipstead and Smitham which was open on race days.

Opened as a single line branch in 1897, the Chipstead Valley line was doubled in 1900 before the opening to Tattenham Corner a year later, in order to cope with the race traffic. A large number of trains was run on Derby Day and up to about 12.15 pm all arrivals were either stabled at Tattenham Corner or despatched as passenger or empty trains back to Purley or London. All arrivals after about 12.15 pm, usually some dozen trains, were stabled one behind the other on the up line between Tattenham Corner and Kingswood. After arrrival of the last down race train, all the empty trains on the up line were then transferred at Kingswood, one by one, to the down line and these generally formed most of the return trains departing between 4.00 pm and 5.00 pm.

Epsom Downs having the Battersea Tool Vans, Tattenham Corner had the Bricklayers Arms steam Breakdown crane. The locomotive bringing this down provided shunting power at Tattenham Corner for the steam excursions and Pullman trains and stand-by locomotives were provided at Forest Hill, East Croydon, Purley and Chipstead.

As on most big occasions on the SR, loaded and empty trains to and from both Epsom Downs and Tattenham Corner carried numbered headboards 1 to 100 for Tattenham Corner trains, 101 to 200 for Epsom Downs trains.

To supplement the normally minimal staff at Epsom Downs and Tattenham Corner stations and to man the additional signal boxes, relief staff from all over the system would be drafted in for ticket collection, train attendance, carriage cleaning and other duties while District Officers and bowler-hatted Signalling, Locomotive, Carriage and Wagon and Permanent Way Inspectors would be much in evidence all the week.

N1 2-6-0s 1879 and 1822 worked Pullman specials from Cannon Street and Charing Cross. All these trains were poorly patronised and the following year only the first class special ran from Victoria to Epsom Downs and one all-Pullman train of eight cars from Charing Cross. By 1954 this Pullman train was reduced to five cars and well before the end of the fifties, had ceased altogether.

A first class special with Dining Car was run to Ascot in the early fifties but this too quickly shared a similar fate.

No Pullman specials were run to Lingfield after the war although one or two Pullman cars were included in one of the four or five special trains up to 1963. The Brighton to Lingfield train ran, without a Pullman, until October 1959 even though the passenger service between Haywards Heath and Horsted Keynes had ceased in March 1958.

Social changes, particularly increasing car ownership, the developing motorway network, live outside TV broadcasts and the legalization of betting shops all combined to erode the race traffic on the railways. Today, forty years after nationalisation, most of the passenger traffic and all the horse box traffic has gone. A handful of special trains run to Ascot and to Tattenham Corner. Tattenham Corner station is reduced to three platforms while Epsom Downs now has only two and the line from Sutton has been singled.

The 5.18 pm race special to Victoria leaving Lingfield on 7th June 1963 behind BR Class 4 4-6-0 75069. Photo: S. C. Nash

Post Southern Railway

Horse racing, suspended during the second World War, was quickly restarted afterwards. Some courses like Gatwick and Portsmouth did not re-open. Epsom, on the other hand, increased its programme with a third meeting over the August Bank Holiday weekend.

The former Southern Railway, by now British Railways Southern Region, set up programmes similar to those which had operated before the war but it soon became evident that habits had changed. For the 1951 Derby a first class special including a Pullman and Dining Car was worked from Victoria to Epsom Downs by two LMS design 2-6-4Ts (42084 and 42097) running bunker to bunker — a number of these locomotives were based on the SR at that time. On the same day electric locomotive 20003 followed with a nine coach Pullman special while two Class

Every Derby Day and on some Oaks Days since the war the Royal Train has left Victoria soon after mid-day conveying members of the Royal Family to Tattenham Corner. In the 1950s a Schools Class 4-4-0 was the motive power but from the mid sixties, after a brief spell of electric working with one of the SR 'Hornbies', a Brush Type 2 Diesel would be borrowed from either Stratford or Old Oak Common Depots until eventually a Class 73 Electro-diesel became the regular motive power. The return journey was sometimes by rail, sometimes by road and once by special train from Chessington South hauled by a West Country Pacific. But at least the Royal Family have remained loyal to the railway, even if most of their subjects no longer travel by SR to the races.

As the forces are mobilised, and the BEF prepare to leave for France, troops are drafted in from barracks and recruitment centres all over Britain. Often travelling for several days on end, they found refreshment and ablution facilities provided at the most unusual places. Here a soldier from a Lancashire Regiment manages to shave at a small countryside station somewhere near Southampton. The exact location is still 'classified' almost fifty years on. . . . .

If anything acted as a prelude to the nationalisation of Britain's railway network, it was the events of the period 1939 to 1945 — The Second World War. In retrospect, this was a fascinating period, but one largely uncovered by railway historians. This is not surprising, in view of the fact that all publications of the era were heavily censored, to prevent the 'enemy' from gleaning the nation's essential secrets. Even magazines like the RCTS 'Railway Observer' were not immune from such censorship. Many leading photographers and enthusiasts of that period en-listed in HM Forces, and those that remained were often discouraged from taking photographs of sensitive locations.

The subject has already been covered in Vol.1 of BACKTRACK, by John Edgington with his two-part article 'Our Railways Go To War'. That study gave a fascinating glimpse of the period 1939-40 which, despite the ominous clouds gathering over Europe, became known as the 'phoney war'. In this period, the armies of Britain and her Empire began to prepare for the lengthy war ahead. It was a period of massive re-armament, by a country which was ill-prepared for war, or as Winston Churchill called it: "The most valuable breathing space ever afforded in human history."

BRITAIN'S RAILWAYS at WAR 1939-1945

by **Dr. ALAN EARNSHAW**

As the blitz worsens, railway companies form their own special fire-fighting units. Late on a November day in 1940, a Southern Railway fire-fighting unit test their hoses and practice for the coming night when they will move into the centre of the great Metropolis to literally dampen Hitler's plans to set London ablaze. The train of six converted tenders, CCT and composite coach is partially in view whilst the locomotive, and guards van which completes the train has arrived and waits in the siding on the opposite side of the running lines. Locomotive Fireman Joseph Green plays the leading hose as he prepares to become a different sort of fireman through the night, all on top of having already worked a normal 10 hour shift!

If the country as a whole was not ready for mobilisation, then at least one part of it was. For throughout the depressed years of the 1920s and 1930s, the railways had formed themselves into a force to be reckoned with. It had begun a few years after the cessation of hostilities in 1919, culminating with the grouping in 1923, after which the four major companies emerged. For the next fifteen years the LMS, GWR, LNER and Southern all invested heavily in both rolling stock and railway infrastructure. This investment at the time may have seemed illogical, particularly with reference to the current state of the economy. Those pre-war improvements totalled an investment of over £315½ million by the Big Four and London Transport in the decade preceding 1939.

As the ARP, Police and Fire-service prepare for a night on the surface, London begins to get ready for a night below. Tube stations being made over to accommodate between 75,000 and 100,000 people nightly, with 124 canteen points being established around the system. In this shot, a 14 year old laundry boy delivers the bedding to be used in one of the numbered bunks which were available only by reservation.

In September 1939 the total railway network comprised some 37,000 miles of running lines, with an additional 14,000 miles of sidings. Much of the passenger stock was also of the first order, with over £100 million having been spent on main-line rolling stock in the decade leading up to the war. This had shown an increase in sleeping cars from 154 to 380, whilst restaurant cars grew in number to 895 from 525. So by the summer of 1938, trains like *The Cheltenham Flyer, The Golden Arrow, The Coronation* and *Coronation Scot* represented the last word in passenger comfort.

On the freight side, there were 678 regular daily express freights, utilising new designs of wagons and vans. For example, in 1938 the number of 20 ton capacity wagons had grown to 45,000 from 25,000 ten years previously. Specialist services, including household removals, cash-on-delivery transport, road-rail tank vehicles, and low-temperature services had been introduced. At all major depots, and many minor stations, railway-owned horse and motor vehicles conveyed goods on to their final destination, and picked up return loads for despatch at the railhead. A country lorry scheme had been introduced to spread the railway network into the most rural areas. In hindsight, it almost seems as though they were gearing up for the coming war.

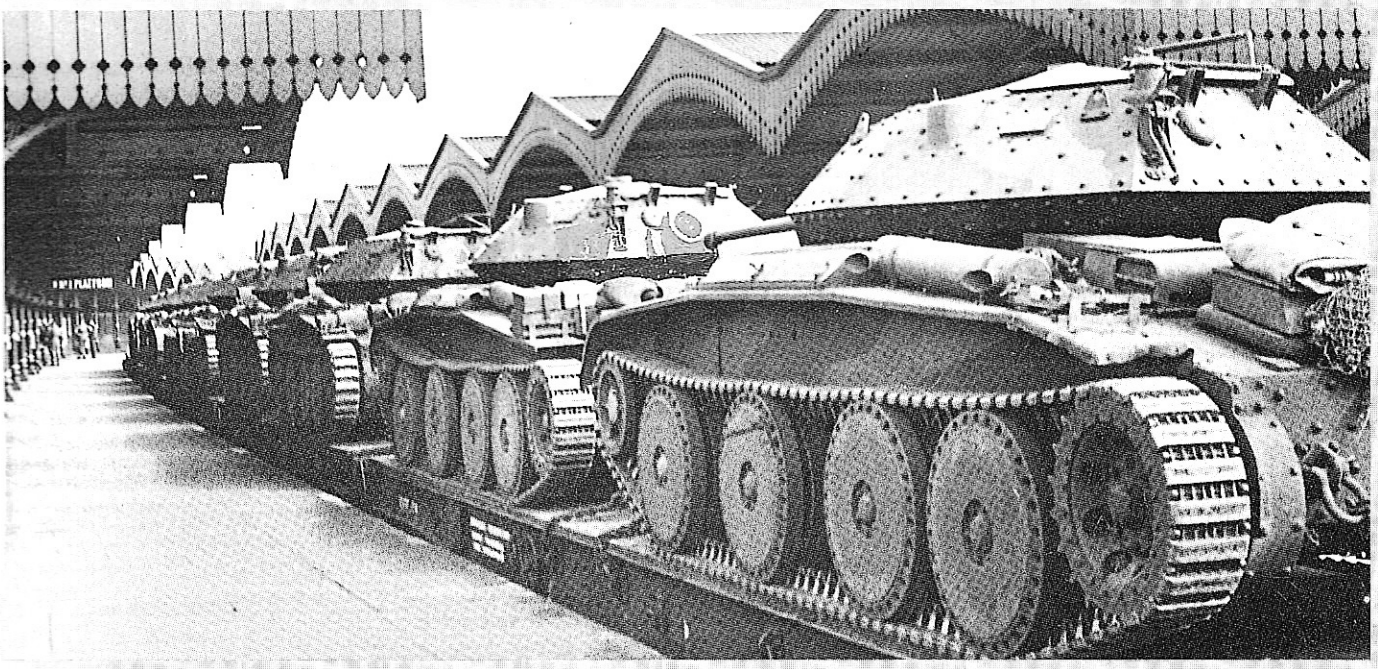
Organisation and Operating Controls

Operating controls were immediately centralised under the Railway Executive, which in turn had two major effects. Firstly all the railway company and privately-owned wagons were pooled, in an endeavour to reduce the running of empty wagons to the bare minimum. Almost overnight, the Executive, through its Central Wagon Control, became responsible for 1¼ million rail freight vehicles, ½ million wagon sheets, ¼ million wagon ropes, and over 17,000 containers. This pooling in effect made the activities of the Railway Clearing House redundant, and very shortly it suspended operations. Secondly, for all running movements a Central Inter-Company Operating Conference was established, to hold daily meetings between the operating divisions of the Big Four. Close contact was maintained between the CICOC and the Ministries of War, Food and Transport, in addition links were later established with United States Transportation Corps.

Through this new control organisation, instructions could be given promptly for the cancellation of trains, re-routing trains away from districts affected by bomb damage, and meeting special demands placed on the railways by the military. It also benefitted civilian traffic which had increased substantially, though this increase was particularly in the field of workmen's trains. To co-ordinate all this extra traffic, over 900 liaison officers were appointed, to work with the railways and the Regional Transport Commissioners, the GPO, the Scottish Home Department, and the Ministries of War, Air, Food, Fuel, Health, Home Security, Labour, Supply, along with the Admiralty.

As the war developed, the growth of war production, incoming convoys and outgoing military traffic began to stretch the capacity of the rail network. An immediate increase was provided by improved signalling and the large-scale

After a sleepless night, people awake from the shelters to pick up the fragments after another heavy bombing raid. Sadly lives have been lost, with others badly injured, houses, factories, shops and the railways have all been hit, but clearing up must commence. A gang of railway workers, still wearing their 'battle-bowlers' hoist away a coach wheel, with desperate urgency the station staff look on, almost seeming to say 'how long before we're clear for running again'.



Train movements of military supplies were usually 'under covers', but it was impossible to tarpaulin sheet large items of equipment like these tanks seen on the move in 1943, their destination was the Russian front, and were eventually shipped from Liverpool in convoy on a converted rubber carrier 'Malayan Prince' which was one of the ships used in the evacuation of Banka Island. After delivering its load to Murmansk, the ship was lost by enemy action south of Iceland. An interesting feature of this photograph is the touching out carried out by the official censor. Certain equipment on the rear of the tank turrets have been painted over, as is evidenced by the 'un-true' circle on the back of the second tank.

replacement of telegraph systems by telephones. Passing loops were provided, and certain sections of track doubled, but these were more in the nature of adjustments. But it was in the marshalling yards, docks, and junctions where the major improvements took place. Inter-company spurs were laid in, facilitating easy exchange, over 200 new signal boxes were opened, and 10,000 new signals installed. Speed in undertaking the tasks was essential; for example one task of quadrupling a section of track, estimated to be a 30 month job in pre-war times was completed inside 12 months. In all 1,200 major jobs were tackled, involving expenditure of some £17 million in the period 1939-46.

All this work involved the railway companies in additional expenses, but the austerity measures of the period meant that the operators' income had been greatly reduced. Though the capital and overall financing of the railway companies was only altered nominally, it was the daily revenue — the operating returns — which took the hardest blow. For example, the LMS, GWR, LNER, Southern Railway and London Transport had a joint income of just under £57 million in 1938, but under an agreement of 31st December 1940, the annual payments to them had been fixed by the Government at just £43 million.

This was paid on the basis of the following shares:-

LMS	£14,749,698
LNER	£10,136,355
GWR	£ 6,670,603
SR	£ 6,607,639
London Transport	£ 4,835,705

The net revenues of the undertakings accrued to the Government, with the exception of investments in transport enterprises not operated by the railways, or those railways owned by the companies in Ireland.

The same agreement provided for three other conditions:

a) The cost of restoring war damage was not charged to the Government. A new scheme was to be introduced by the Government in relation to war damage suffered by public utility undertakings. The contributions falling upon the controlled undertakings under this scheme would be borne by them out of their own resources.

b) Under the provision of the control agreement maintenance charges (including renewals) were standardised on the basis of an average pre-war charge adjusted for a variation in price levels.

c) Government control was to be continued for a minimum period of one year after the cessation of hostilities and, before control came to an end, time was to be given for the operation of any statutory machinery governing the level of charges.

Early Precautions

By the summer of 1939 it seemed that war was inevitable, despite Herr Hitler's declaration in August that "Germany has never sought conflict with England, and has never interfered in English interests. On the contrary, she has for years endeavoured to win England's friendship." So whilst the politicians struggled to maintain an uneasy peace, the railways prepared for war in addition to their normal roles. In July and August they carried millions of passengers to the seaside and country, for many on what was to be their last summer holiday. Within a few weeks, those same coaches were again leaving the major cities, taking with them thousands of children as evacuees!

The evacuation of children was an immediate priority to be undertaken by the Big Four, but other priorities were also tackled. First steps were taken to protect the railways from the hazards of bombing and gas attacks. Precautions were many and varied, for nobody had any real idea of what to expect. The big threat was that of gas, a tactic horribly, but successfully employed in World War One. Special de-gassing, and decontamination trains were pressed into service, whilst railwaymen were given full instructions in what to do in case of such attacks. Despite an initial shortage of gas masks, rail crews were given priority, and received their supplies within a few weeks of the declaration of war. Some 47 specially equipped cleansing vans were prepared, and kept ready to move into areas where gas attacks occured, and where no facilities existed for dealing with them.

As it was, gas was not the threat that it was envisaged to be; rather it was the damage by aerial attack that proved to be the real danger. Air Raid Precautions were also instigated, ranging from the simple task of re-painting white coach roofs grey to training over 170,000 railway employees in ARP duties. Fire-fighting trains were located at key junctions on the outskirts of major cities, in constant readiness to enter the city in time of air attack. Several trains were comprised of CCTs, six locomotive tenders, crew coach and a guard's van. Fitted with petrol driven 20hp pumps, they were able to power up to twelve hoses, each delivering 60psi. Thus equipped, the trains could deal with fires in buildings up to eight stories high. Other smaller fire-fighting trains were fitted with trailer pumps which could deliver up to 150 gallons per minute. Even normal working trips like yard shunters were supplied with a

motley selection of fire-fighting equipment like hose-pipes and stirrup pumps in case of fires in goods yards where motor driven appliances could not reach.

A number of ambulance and evacuation trains were formed. The ambulance trains were used both for civilian and military purposes, both at home and abroad. The evacuation trains were used to clear civilian casualties from major cities, or evacuate patients from existing hospitals which were considered to be vulnerable to damage or attack.

Air-Raid Damage

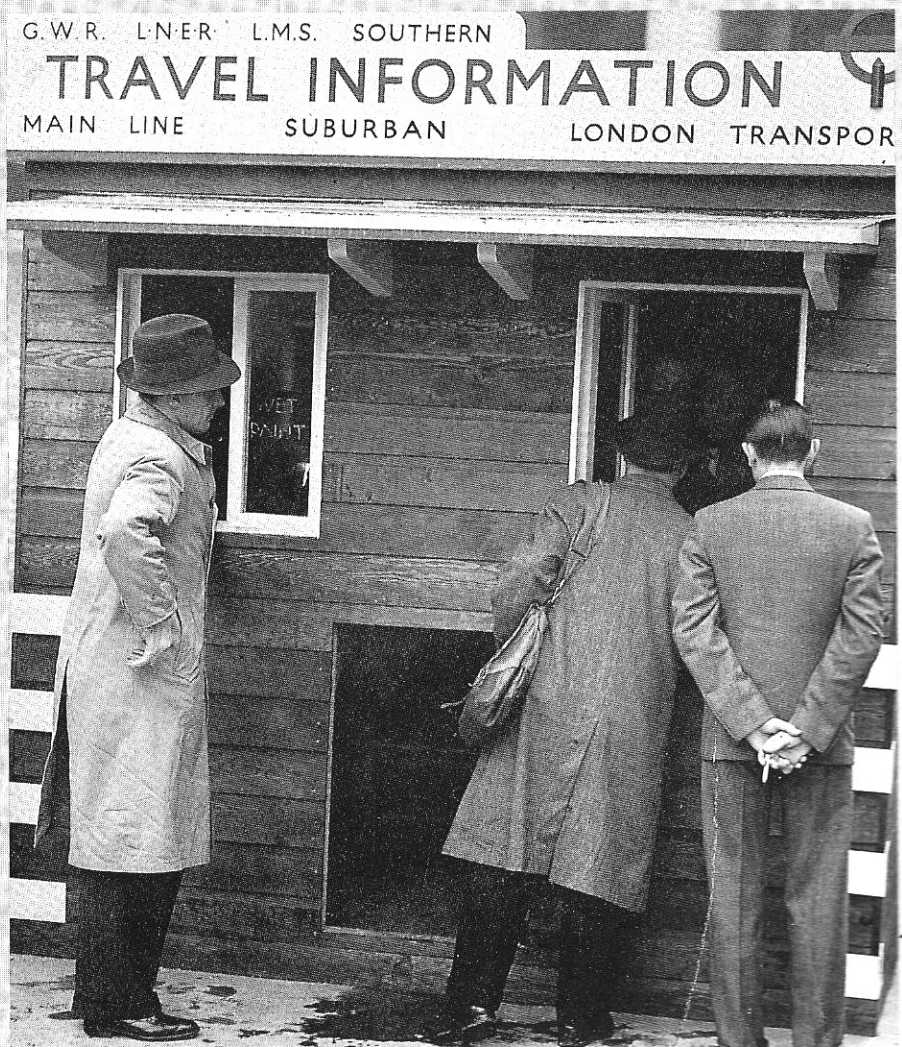
Railway installations, because of their size and complexity were particularly vulnerable to air attack and both sides in the conflict successfully employed the tactic of attacking railways. Within a few months railway engineers were becoming adept at the 'quick-repair' system, and had breakdown cranes and repair teams on permanent stand-by. These rapid repairs could have a four-track main line repaired within a matter of hours after the initial damage, with work frequently beginning before the air raid had even ceased.

At one main line station (still classified as an official secret forty-nine years on!) a 68-lever signal box which was destroyed by incendiaries was replaced within 24 hours, with a new mechanical interlocking frame. Within two weeks all the levers were re-connected, and the signal and telegraph staff took complete possession after 10 days. At another location, a 32-lever box was totally destroyed by a bomb; it was replaced and fully working inside 17½ hours.

In a raid on Teesside, a station was so badly damaged that trains could not use it at all and a 'shuttle service' was introduced using buses. The damaged train blocking the station was removed to Darlington works, with full passenger services being restored exactly 47 hours after the attack. Elsewhere a main line cutting with four tracks suffered a direct hit near a tunnel mouth. Within five hours the tunnel had been shored up, and single line traffic introduced. After five days hard work, a bomb-crater 22′ deep had been filled in, a 55 yard stretch of retaining wall repaired, and the tunnel portal re-built.

The same story was echoed throughout the British railway network, and whether it was at a large city station, marshalling yard, or wayside halt, repair teams worked without let-up. The prime goal was to achieve the quickest possible resumption of traffic along the nation's vital arteries. In later years, many of the men who had helped re-build Britain's railways during the blitz, were sent overseas to help re-build the railways in France, Belgium and Holland, as these lines became a vital part of the Allied offensive.

Elsewhere tanks destined for use by Allied forces were shipped to large training grounds which had been requisitioned by the military. Large tracts of land like Salisbury Plain (still under military control) are well known, but others less so. One example is Lowther Park near Penrith, in what was formerly Cumberland. Here a vast tank training area was developed, using the park, and a nearby plateau on the Lakeland Fells along which the Roman road 'High Street' ran. Tanks for Lowther were off loaded at Langwathby and Armathwaite on the Settle-Carlisle line, and at Penrith, Clifton and Shap on the WCML. This view at Clifton shows the difficulties caused by the absence of a convenient loading dock, which frequently resulted in damage to the track-work. Accordingly though it was the nearest station for Lowther, it was the least used of the five.



Civilian Traffic

Early economies had to be made, including the withdrawal of certain express services, sleeping coaches, and seven hundred restaurant cars (leaving only 74 in service). The principle adopted was that war needs must come first, with all other traffic secondary. Other travel restrictions were introduced to cut civilian traffic to the bare minimum; cheap day tickets were withdrawn, and

To simplify the task of dispensing passenger information, centralised information offices were opened, at which travellers could obtain information on trains on suburban, main line and underground services. These were little more than small wooden huts, but had the added advantage of being easily moved to locations where they were needed to replace bomb-damaged buildings.

bank holiday excursions drastically reduced. Sleeping car services were at first withdrawn completely, but then taken over by the Ministry of War Transport. For example when the Scottish sleeping cars were re-introduced, many were extended to travel further north than previously. Each sleeping train was usually heavily booked, with the various military liaison officers reserving berths for serving officers travelling to or from their postings. Likewise, rail catering was dramatically altered, with services provided for the prevailing circumstances. These ranged widely, from pre-packed sandwich boxes to a full dining car depending on the particular service and its strategic value.

Despite all of this, and the slogans and posters asking "IS YOUR JOURNEY REALLY NECESSARY?", passenger traffic continued to increase. An example of this can be shown by 20,000 million passenger rail miles in 1938, which had increased to 30,000 million rail miles in 1942. A large number of those miles were by dependants of servicemen; in April that year almost eleven million rail journeys were made by off-duty servicemen and their families.

All of this pressed the railways to the maximum capacity and even the oldest of rolling stock was brought back into use. In the early days of the war the pages of Railway Observer are packed with notes about trains like the *Flying Scotsman* with 21 coaches; but by the mid-1940s these observations become less noticeable, as train formations unthinkable in the 1930s became commonplace.

Workmen's Trains

In addition to all the other civilian traffic, a fresh type of train service began to emerge in the early 1940s; these were the new-style 'Workmen's Trains'. Brought about by a war-time construction programme, these trains were introduced to run to newly built Government factories in rural areas. These factories were the result of a Ministry of Supply policy to build on green-field sites, close to sources supplying the raw material used in production. This was a logical move, because the raw material was often heavy whilst the finished product was lighter. In moving the factories, the demand on railways' freight movements were reduced by up to 40%. The strategic reasons for moving factories into the country were evident, but in these areas, there was an acute labour shortage, with much of the available workforce being employed in agriculture. To compensate, many special trains were scheduled to operate from urban areas to the Government factories. In some cases special stations were built, whilst in others rural station facilites were improved. For example in 1942 over 400 million passenger journeys were made by holders of Workmen's Tickets, whilst by the same time over 200 new 'factory' stations had been opened.

At both the new factories and in the existing industrial and commercial centres, workers' hours were staggered to ease the burden on the railways, whilst daylight saving schemes were also introduced. In the winter of 1941-2 the London and South Eastern Regional Board set up 47 local group committees representing employers, labour, and the transport undertakings. By co-ordinating road and rail services into specific areas, the total workforce in these areas combined to 500,000 people, but by this co-ordination, only 95,000 employees had their hours of work altered by more than 15 minutes. By

The dispensing of information became a vital necessity in World War II, and this speeded up the withdrawal of the old telegraph system. The replacement telephone services were a major improvement, but subject to damage in air raids. Here a small exchange is located in the vaults of a main line station, completely partitioned off from the remainder of the cellar by British Gypsum's patent 'Gyproc Fire-proof Wall System'. Interestingly the steel helmet and gas mask bag hang at a convenient arm's length.

But when the telephone system failed, and it did, help was at hand. At the height of the blitz one week saw 800 poles and 3,000 wires destroyed by air attack. In these cases a despatch rider was the only answer, and each major centre had a motor-bike on permanent standby. Usually employing some member of staff's personal motor-bike, which he would be happy to lend, as he received extra petrol coupons in return.

staggering the hours of institutions like Government departments, schools, and commercial business, terrific savings were made, and the pre-war rush hour became just a memory.

Freight Traffic

General freight traffic for both civilian and military needs was regulated by the Ministry of Supply and managed by Regional Transport Committees. Zoning of supplies was introduced, district by district, to make each region self-supporting and more autonomous. The increase in home-grown produce through the 'Dig for Victory' campaign, saw hundreds of new agricultural schemes being set up in every district. This reduced the number of freight miles considerably, eliminating needless long-distance cross country trips. However, this was balanced by an increase in freight for home produced items such as sugar beet, tractors, butter and meat, which had previously been imported.

Other civilian traffic which had previously been carried by other means, particularly coastal shipping, was now forced on to the railways — specifically coal from Newcastle which had plied down the East Coast to London. By 1943, around four million tons of coal were being carried each week, some 45% of which had been moved by coastal shipping in pre-war years. To handle this traffic, the CICOC introduced block trains running from collieries to distribution centres. Trains were marshalled with wagons placed in strict 'drop-off' order in an attempt to reduce the amount of marshalling and shunting involved.

New Locomotives

Despite the acute shortage of men, materials and finance, the railways continued to produce locomotives, even though a considerable amount of their workshop space was taken up for 'war production'. The Stanier Class 8F locomotives were an immediate favourite with the Ministry, large numbers being ordered in the early days of the war for use on continental railways — with appropriate mechanical alterations — for overseas use. Other building programmes continued to help fill the vital gaps in the available locomotive stud.

Despite all this investment and the addition of American and ROD locomotives, the railway service was hard pressed and an early 'ageing' process affected both men and machines alike. Locomotives which would have been 'failed' in peace time were quickly patched and returned to service, with the shed workshops doing jobs which should by rights have gone to Crewe, Doncaster, Swindon and the like. The aim was to keep them running at all costs.

Military Traffic

In the first four years of the war an average of 40,000 troop trains a year were operated, with this number doubling in 1944, then trebling in 1945-6, particularly with the build-up of forces prior to the D-Day landings. In addition munitions, armaments, military equipment, food and clothing had to be carried for the armed forces.

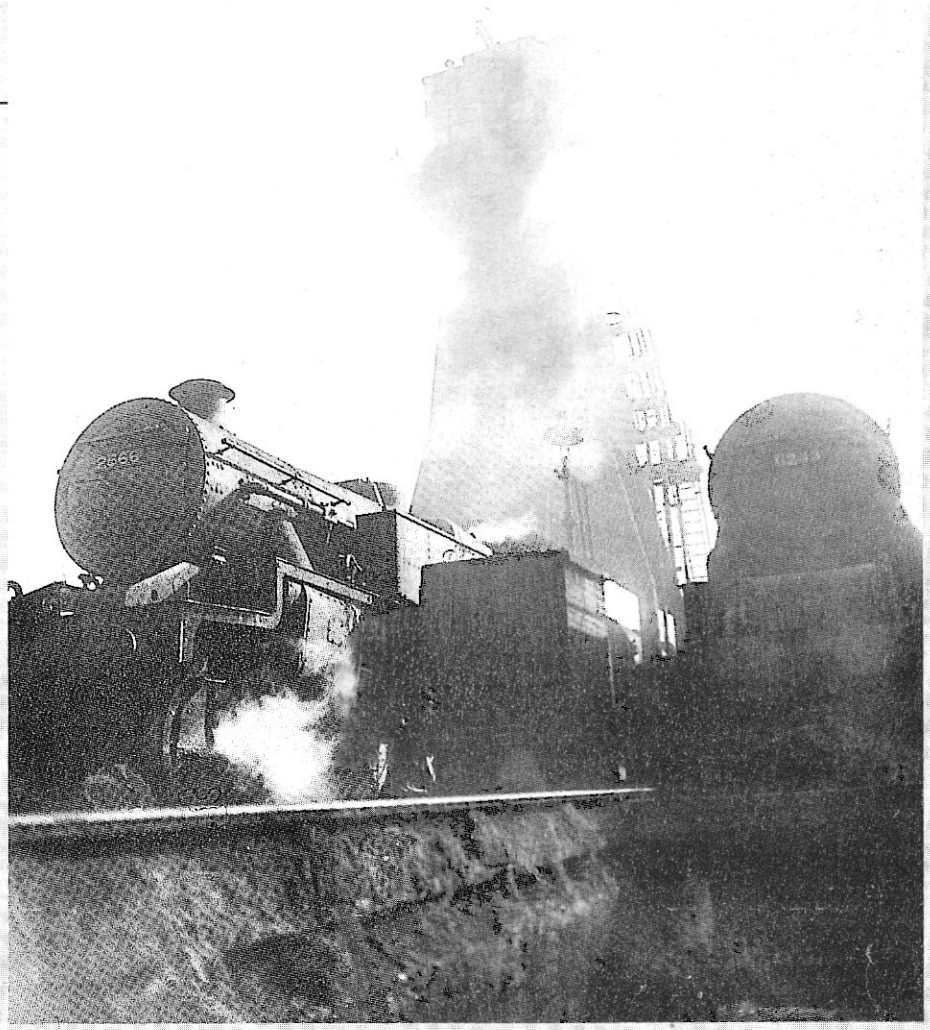
The Railway Executive never had much advance warning of military transport needs, the powers in Whitehall deeming such information on the 'need to know' basis. Therefore it was not uncommon for the railway controllers to receive a request for a troop train to run from A to Z, with the barest notice being given. Frequently these trains would run from one end of the country to the other, perhaps crossing two or even three regions, and many more districts.

In these cases, the operating control would give the train immediate priority, determine the route and arrange the exchange points for locomotives and crews. If this meant the cancellation of other traffic, then so be it. There were four specific periods when the demand for military traffic took complete precedence over every other form of traffic. The first was at the general mobilisation in 1939, when the British Expeditionary Force embarked for France. This was a staggered build up, and in great contrast to the events of a year later following the retreat from Dunkirk. Then, in the space of eight days, the Railway Executive ran 620 trains carrying a third of a million men from seven channel ports. All this was done without any prior notice to the Executive, and involved the use of over 2,000 coaches which were hastily drawn from all over the railway system and formed into a government controlled pool. A few years later, as the tide of war turned, the 1st Army embarked for North Africa, a movement which involved transporting 185,000 troops, 20,000 vehicles and 250,000 tons of supplies. This involved 440 troop trains, 680 special freights, and 150,000 wagon

loads consigned on normal scheduled freight trains.

If the railway considered this movement to be substantial, then what happened in the period leading up to the D-Day landings made it pale into insignificance. As a build-up for the Deliverence Day, a number of concentration points were established around the country at strategic locations. Quiet country stations and green-field sites were chosen, obviously located well away from the main centres of civilian and military importance. This brought about some amazing transformations, as was evidenced by a small Southern Railway station. There, a simple wayside halt with a single goods siding was transformed into a vast depot containing no less than 14 miles of sidings; two exchange sidings were laid in and a new signal box constructed. All of this provided capacity for over 2,500 wagons, which in turn needed four USA War Department 0-6-0s to handle the yard shunting. Elsewhere another green-field site was transformed into a major stores depot, with 17 sidings and a 1,000 foot long warehouse with over-head travelling cranes.

26th March 1944 had been set as the date for the initial commencement of transportation for troops and materials to the invasion centres. However, British railways began this movement some two months early, and by the time 26th March came round, they had already run 24,459 special trains in connection with invasion traffic. The movement of stores, heavy equipment and armoured vehicles began on 10th May, and was structured in three phases. The first was material intended for conveyance by landing craft, the second was traffic going by coasters, the final phase was the traffic which was transferred into cargo ships. Armoured vehicles and a number of other loads caused many problems for the railway operating committees, as they involved a total of 6,108 journeys with 'out of gauge' loads, all of which required special running arrangements.



LMS 'Maids of all work', stand proudly on shed at the start of another days duty, tired, work stained, and often running with patched up repairs which required attention at Crewe or Derby, these engines and their crews continued moving the nation's essential traffic.

All of this required special co-operation between the railways and the military in order to minimise the disruption to passenger traffic. However, many unavoidable cancellations resulted, particularly on Anglo-Scottish services. This was as a result of 113 trains which were run south over the border at the rate of nine per day as they were consigned to their respective invasion centres. Elsewhere civilian trains would often be commandeered as they progressed along their journeys. For example, in June 1944 my mother was travelling from Witney in Oxfordshire to Huddersfield, a journey which involved five scheduled changes in the end took two days with 83 stops or changes!

Though long trains of tanks, or guns could be seen, the vast majority of loads were moved under tarpaulin sheets, a situation that led many railway workers to call this vast mobilisation, 'The Tarpaulin Armada'.

Essential to the actual invasion, were the concentrated air attacks by the RAF and this required a continual bombing strategy against the Axis' coastal defences. The movement of bombs and ammunition was given priority second only to the 'Overlord' (D-Day) traffic. This resulted in a vast amount of west-east traffic running from ports like Bristol and Liverpool to three centres located on the LNER in East Anglia, with a smaller one in Yorkshire. This traffic moved over a ¼ of a million tons of bombs in three months using no less than 600 special trains. Clearance of these trains was in the main handled by USAF personnel, who at the height of the operation cleared 626 wagons in one single day.

Petrol and oil traffic was another major source of employment for the railways and although the vast majority

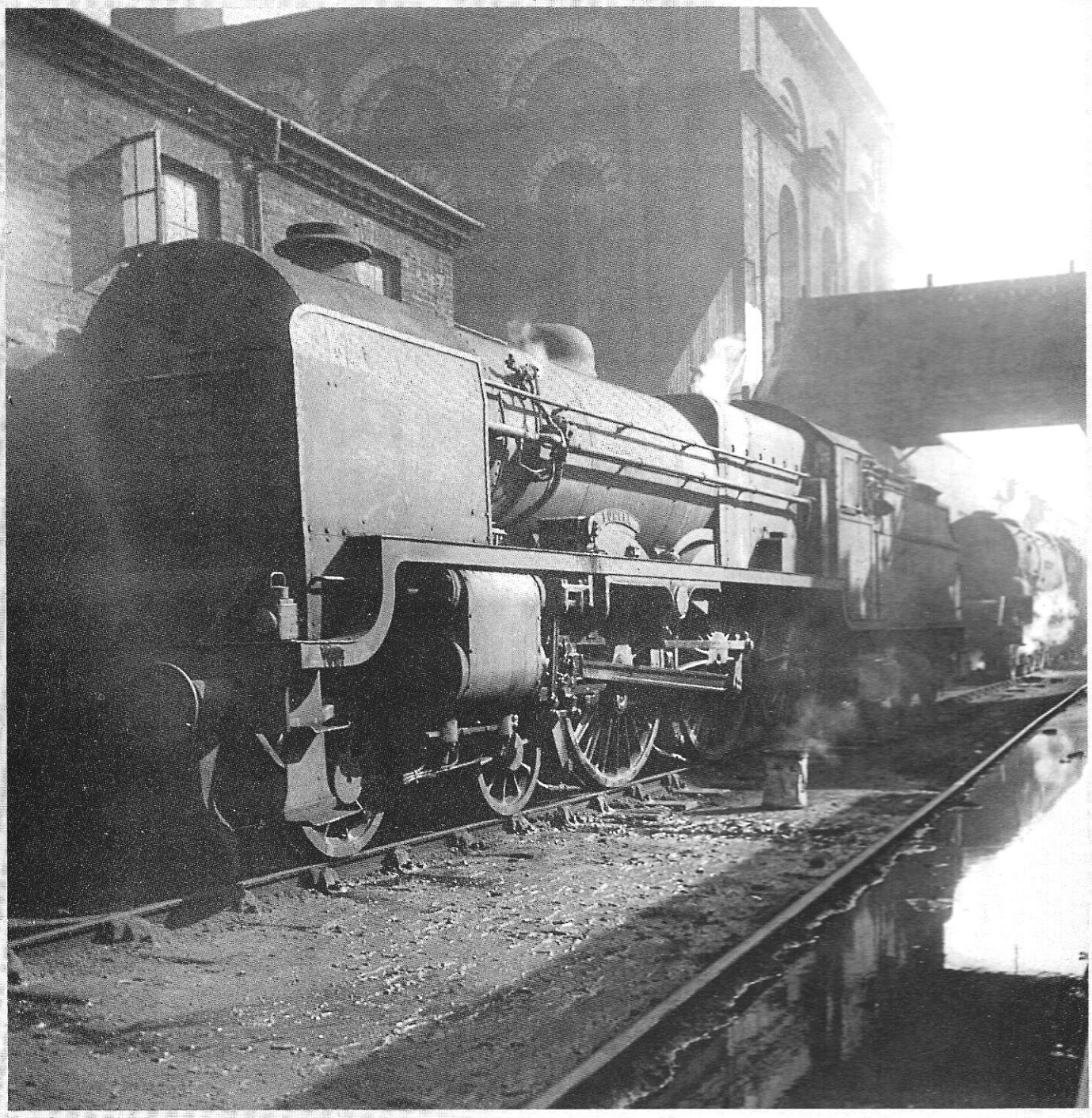
Southern Region 21C9 storms away from London on a 14 coach train in the early days of the war. This extremely attractive Merchant Navy class was so named, as a tribute to the valiant efforts of often un-armed seamen bringing the vital supplies over the Atlantic.

of this was being moved along static pipe-lines, three million gallons still had to be moved every 24 hours. In addition to this, 496 special trains were run from Scotland and the north to the invasion ports carrying four gallon petrol containers nicknamed 'Jerry-cans'. One eastern Scottish town alone despatched over two million loaded cans in 4,000 wagons.

The train movement figures quoted by the railway companies in the prelude to the invasion are quite staggering; for example the LMS ran 1,232 stores trains in a two week period in May 1944, whilst the GWR ran 3,036 stores, troop, and equipment specials in the same period. Largely the movement was north-south, with a percentage of west-east movements. Immediately preceding D-Day, the railways were at their busiest, with 4,500 trains being run in four days. In the three weeks that followed a further 13,000 trains were run. There were also 113 military mail trains, whilst on a sadder note the ambulance trains made over 300 journeys.

The period 1939-45 may be regarded as a sad time in human history, particularly in view of the ominous events which signalled the end of the war with Japan. However, in terms of railway history it was a fascinating period, and as indicated earlier, one which was largely un-recorded. Though organisations like the RCTS continued to function, many of their members were on active service, or otherwise occupied with civilian duties which extended their normal working hours, leaving little time for personal hobbies. Photographs of the period, whilst not scarce, are very limited — particularly in view of the difficulties involved in taking photographs which should officially have been submitted to the official censor. Accordingly, when Atlantic's book editor, Derek Huntriss, began searching out pictures for the *Trains In Trouble* series, and found an un-touched box of war-time photographs, the opportunity was too great to miss. Therefore in the near future, an Atlantic book on *British Railways 1939-45* will be appearing on the shelves of your local book shops. It provides a fascinating glimpse of railway and social history in the period, and contains many hitherto un-published photographs. Meanwhile research into the subject is on-going, along with the period 1914-18, and the author would be delighted to hear from any reader who can help out.

Whilst at the other end of the day, Fowler tendered *Bunsen* awaits its next duty. Less glamorous than a Spitfire, less formidable than a battle-ship; but surely, this was also *their* finest hour!



ABOVE: Part of the block shelf showing block bells and pegging instrument, the three positions denoting state of the line, viz: 'Line Blocked', 'Line Clear' and 'Train on Line'. A July 1981 picture. Photos: S. C. Dent

LEFT: Interior view of the former Great Central Railway signalbox at Wath Central depicting a typical GC lever frame with many of the lever heads having been shortened due to motorisation. Wath Central is situated at the southern (Mexborough) end of the Wath Yard complex. Since this picture was taken in July 1981 and the closure of the Manchester, Sheffield and Wath electrified route, this area has been considerably rationalised.

IN THE BOX

BELOW: Desford Junction signalbox on the MR Leicester-Burton on Trent line, 4th May 1963. It was at this point that the 1832 branch to Ratby, Glenfield and Leicester West Bridge left the main line. At the point of junction there was a typical MR feature, milepost 0. The signalman pointed out that twice a year the weedkilling train went down the branch and on these occasions the daily goods was already at West Bridge. This necessitated a railwayman having to cycle back from West Bridge with the key, returning it by the same means. Photo: R. C. Riley

Scottish

An essay of Scottish scenes

1 **On 16th June 1966, B1 Class 4-6-0 61132 arrives at Pittenweem with a light freight bound for Crail on the former NBR East of Fife line. At this time the line had very infrequent traffic and the appearance of the Avery scales on the platform indicates that this may have been an equipment recovery train. Passenger traffic had ceased on 6th September 1965 and goods traffic was offically withdrawn from 18th July 1966.**

2 **Standard Class 4 2-6-4T 80092 approaches Killin Junction with the first train of the day from Killin. This branch (featured in our last issue) closed on 28th September 1965 along with the line through Callander, following a landslip near Glenoglehead.**

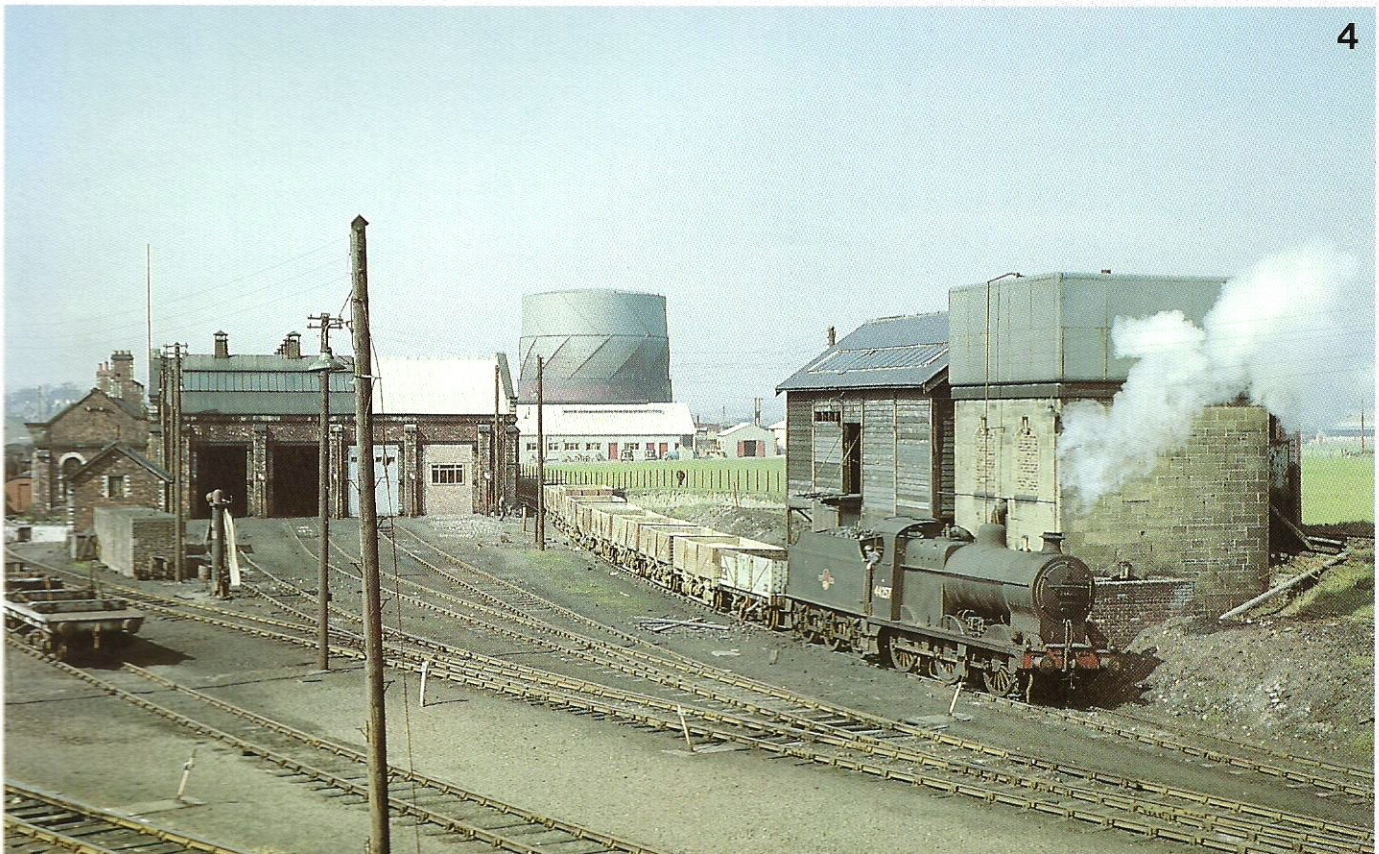
Selection

s by photographer **ROY HOBBS**

3 **Former Caledonian Railway Pickersgill 4-4-0 54465 stands at Careston awaiting return to Forfar with the SLS/BLS 'Scottish Rambler' railtour on 23rd April 1962.**

3

4 **Class 4F 0-6-0 44257 shunts at Forfar shed on 23rd May 1962. At that time Forfar was a sub-depot of Perth (63A) serving the freight only branches radiating from this point. Whilst being host to several withdrawn engines of CR origin which included 2P 4-4-0, 0-6-0 and 1P 0-4-4T, it had a working allocation of three Class 5s and one CR 2F 0-6-0T.**



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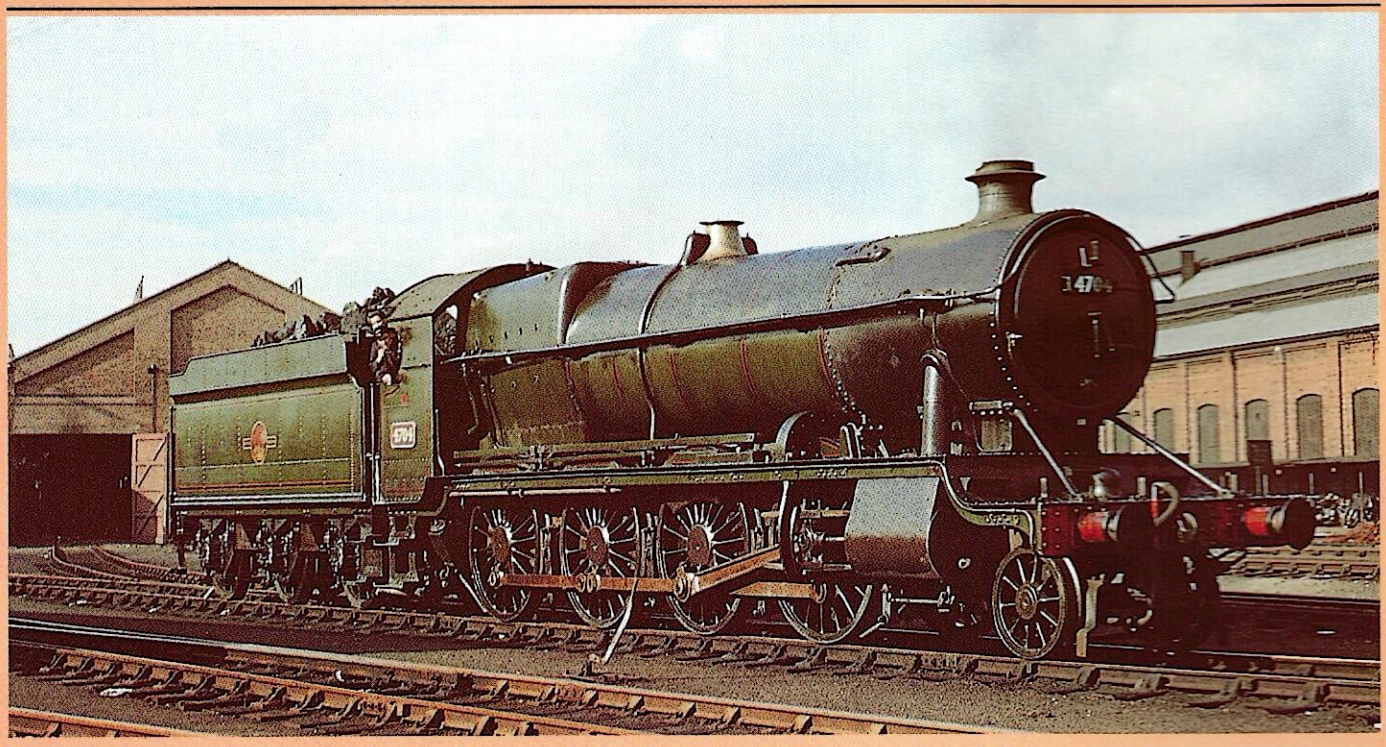


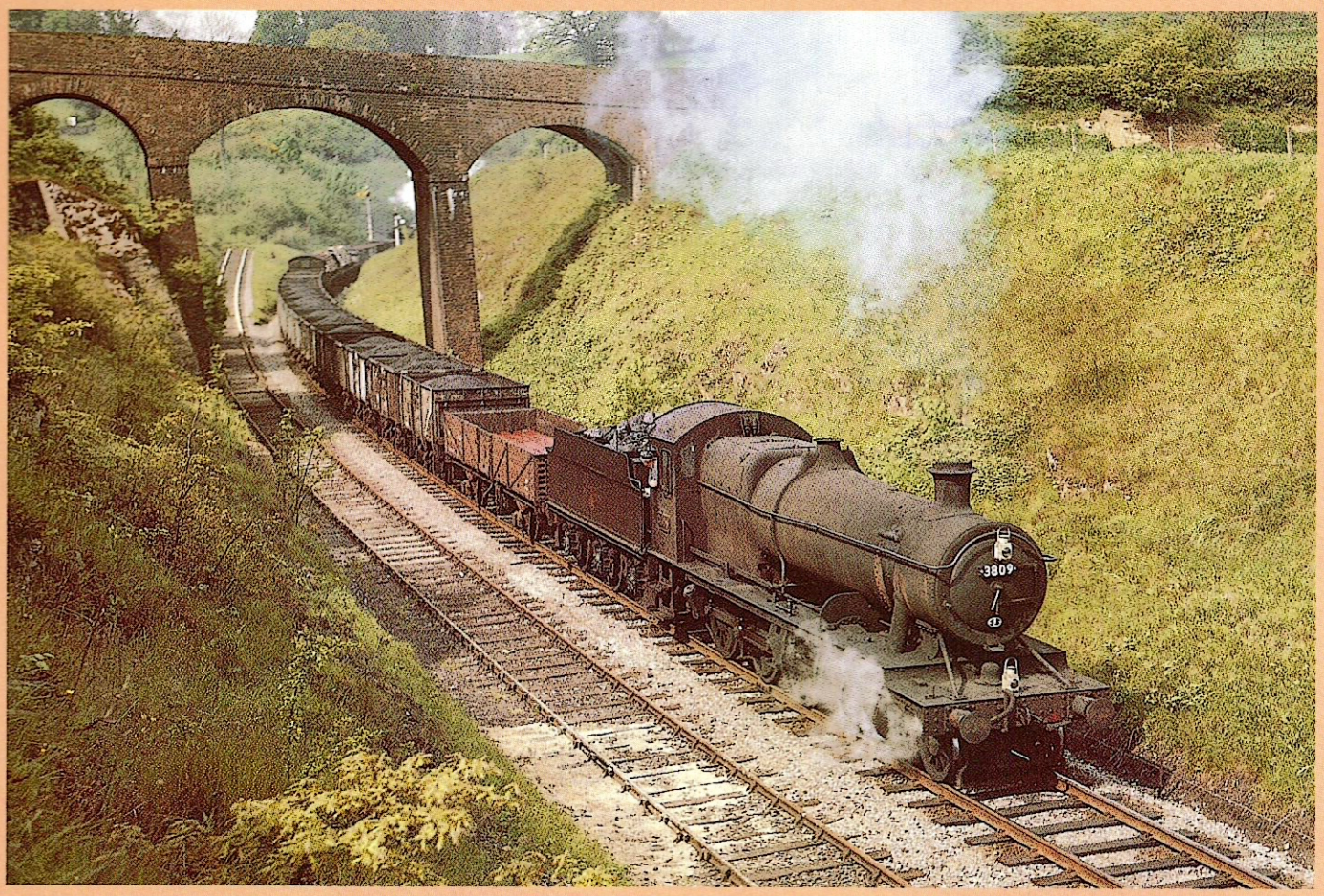
Eight coupled Great Western

TOP: The Churchward Mixed Traffic 2-8-0s of the 47XX Class were primarily used on overnight fast freight trains except on weekends in the Summer service when they were successfully used on passenger duties. 4700 was built in 1919 with a standard No. 1 boiler as fitted to the Stars; it became the first GWR engine with outside admission steam pipes and took part in the 1925 Centenary celebrations at Darlington. Eight more were built in 1922-3, but axle loading precluded their widespread use and no more were built. Nevertheless they were one of Churchward's most successful designs. Painted black from wartime onwards: in BR days 4702 was the only one to be lined out. Between 1957 and 1959 all were repainted in green and 4704 was recorded in the Carriage Sidings at Old Oak Common on 27th October 1957. Photo: R. C. Riley

BOTTOM: The 1.25 pm (SO) Paddington-Kingswear was a train on which the 47XX locomotives were regularly to be seen in the Summer. 4705 is seen at Westbourne Bridge with this train on 27th August 1960. These were the only GWR tender engines scheduled for 100,000 miles of service between overhaul, the figure for Kings being 70,000 and other 4-6-0s and the 28XX 2-8-0s were 80,000. Photo: R. C. Riley

ABOVE: Although very similar in appearance to the earlier 28XX class, the 2884 class was updated considerably. They were slightly heavier engines and were fitted with outside steam pipes, short safety-valve bonnets and large windowed cabs. Here 2-8-0 3859 heads an iron ore train near Southam, Glouc. on 15th June 1962. Photo: W. Potter

BELOW: Sister engine 3809 is climbing out of Ledbury tunnel with an up coal freight on 16th May 1964 banked by 2-6-2T 4124. During the years 1945-7, twenty of the 28XX-38XX class were converted to burn fuel oil and in the process were renumbered in the series 48XX, replacing the Collett 0-4-2Ts which were renumbered in the 14XX series. Photo: M. Mensing



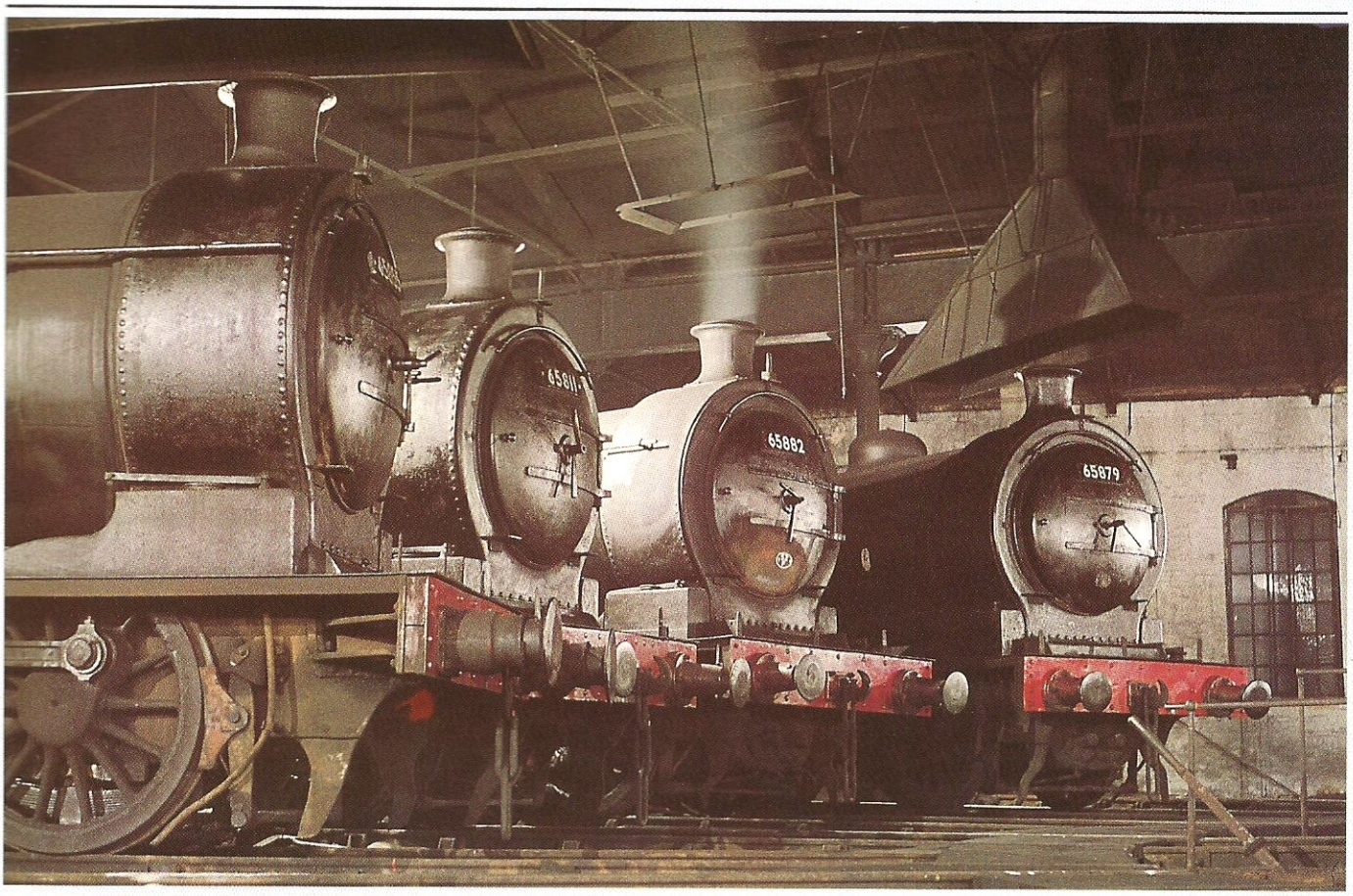
Both photographs depict J27 0-6-0 65891 as it shunts Scotsgap yard during its return from Rothbury, prior to departure for Morpeth during the last week of operation of the branch in November 1963. The Wansbeck Valley line ran from Morpeth to Reedsmouth Junction where it met the Border Counties line from Riccarton Junction to Hexham. Both lines represented the southernmost operation of the former North British Railway. Complete closure of the final remnant from Woodbury to Morpeth took effect from 23rd September 1966. Photos: Roy Hobbs

LNER

CLASS

J27

Designed by Wilson Wordsell, the long-lived LNER Class J27 0-6-0s were introduced in 1906 as North Eastern Railway Class P3. Along with the Q6s, they became the last examples of pre-grouping steam locomotives to survive on BR.



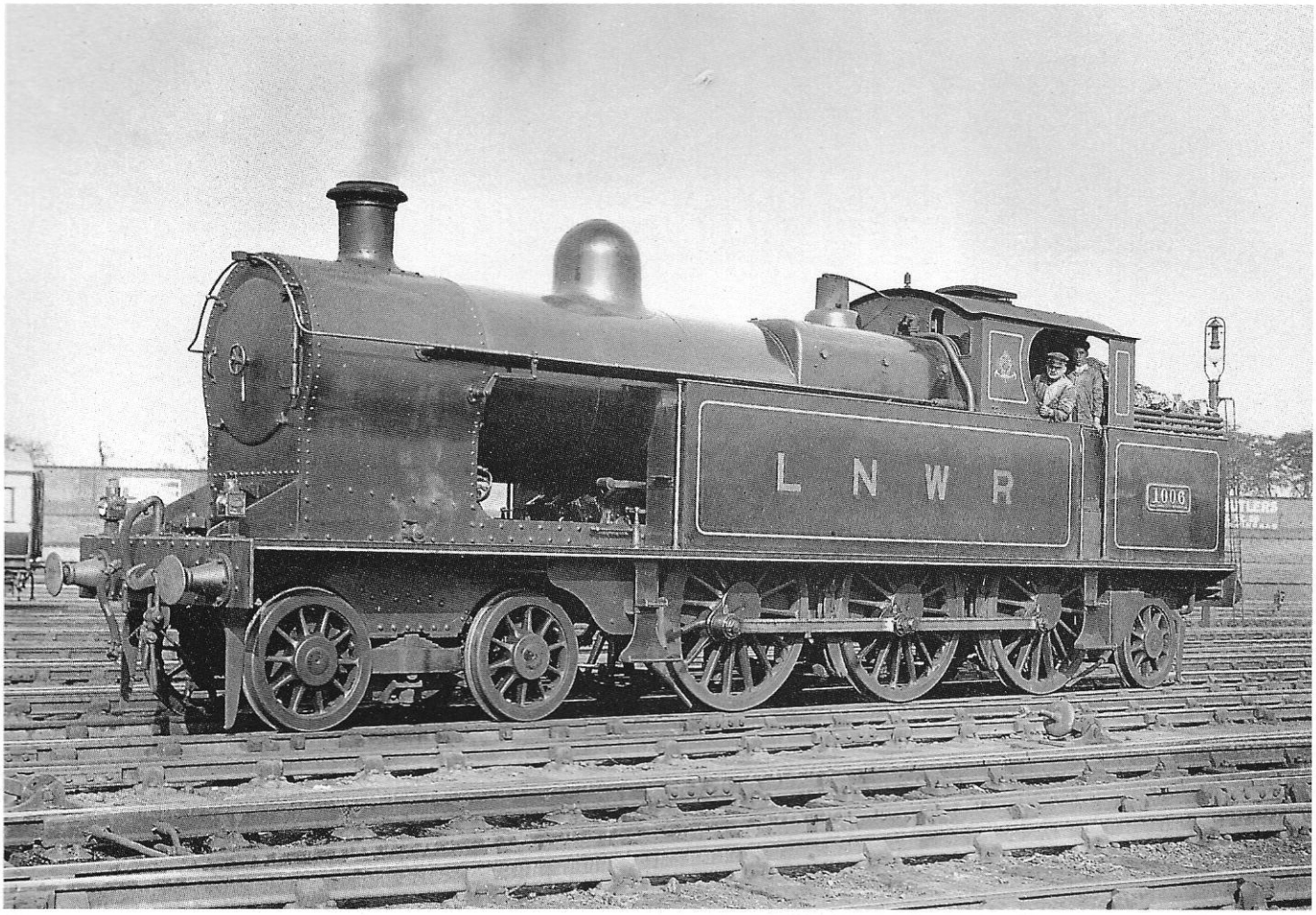
TOP: Inside the roundhouse at Sunderland mpd, a line-up of J27 0-6-0s have been prepared by the MNA enthusiast group for their final workings on 9th September 1967. This was the last day of steam operation in the North East of England. Photo: Paul Riley

BOTTOM: J27 0-6-0 65879 climbs Seaton Bank with coal empties for South Hetton colliery during the last week of steam operation in the North East. Final duties also included workings to Tees Yard, Dunston and the Silksworth Branch. Photo: Roy Hobbs

Steam Finalé at Marylebone

ABOVE: Stanier Class 5 44872 leaves Marylebone with the 4.38 pm semi-fast for Nottingham Victoria on 2nd September 1966. This was the penultimate day of through working before closure to passenger traffic north of Aylesbury.

BELOW: An unidentified 2-6-4T waits to depart with a van train in March 1963. At this time the station was under LMR control, the majority of local services having been dieselised with dmu stock.
Photos: Roy Hobbs



LNWR 4-6-2T 1006 at Crewe, where it was built new with a superheater in September 1912. The large initials LNWR were confined to Whale 4-4-2Ts and Bowen Cooke 4-6-2Ts and 0-8-2Ts. Photo: NRM collection, York

CREWE at home and away

Railway historian Philip Atkins sheds some new light on the LNWR 4-6-2Ts

by Philip Atkins

Just eighty years ago, in the summer of 1909, some unique locomotive workings could be observed on the West Coast Main Line. A green Great Northern Railway large-boilered 4-4-2 was working between Euston and Crewe, where one could also glimpse the legendary blue Caledonian Railway 4-6-0 903 *Cardean* which was exceptionally working *south* of Carlisle. Meanwhile a sombre black London and North Western Railway 'Experiment' Class 4-6-0 exchanged Shap for Beattock and made daily appearances at Glasgow Central Station.

It has hitherto been supposed that these locomotive exchanges had no subsequent discernible influence upon LNWR locomotive policy or design, but a newly discovered report dated October 1909 by C. J. Bowen Cooke puts a new complexion on the matter.

Cooke was appointed Chief Mechanical Engineer of the London and North Western Railway on 1st March 1909 in succession to George Whale, and he appears to have wasted little time in initiating a locomotive exchange between the LNWR and the GN and Caledonian Railways, to take place between 13th June and 10th July that summer.

Between Euston and Crewe and King's Cross and Leeds there was very little to choose between the coal consumption of the LNW 'Precursor' 4-4-0 and the Ivatt large 4-4-2 designs. The GN 4-4-2 is understood to have failed at Rugby on one occasion with an overheated big end, whilst the 'Precursor' is understood to have 'dropped' its Joy motion when running on the GNR.

					Time (min) Gained	Lost	Net
Euston-Crewe 13th June-9th July							
LNWR	4-4-0	510	40.47lb/mile	47		5	+ 42
GNR	4-4-2	1451	40.82lb/mile	75		24	+ 51
King's Cross-Doncaster-Leeds 14th June-10th July							
LNWR	4-4-0	412	36.24lb/mile	245		111	+134
GNR	4-4-2	1451	34.39lb/mile	230½		51	+179½
Crewe-Carlisle 14th June-11th July							
LNWR	4-6-0	2630	55.67lb/mile	39		17	+ 22
CR	4-6-0	903	61.12lb/mile	80		30	+ 50
Carlisle-Glasgow 14th June-10th July							
LNWR	4-6-0	1405	57.33lb/mile	18		37	− 19
CR	4-6-0	907	58.51lb/mile	45		54	− 9

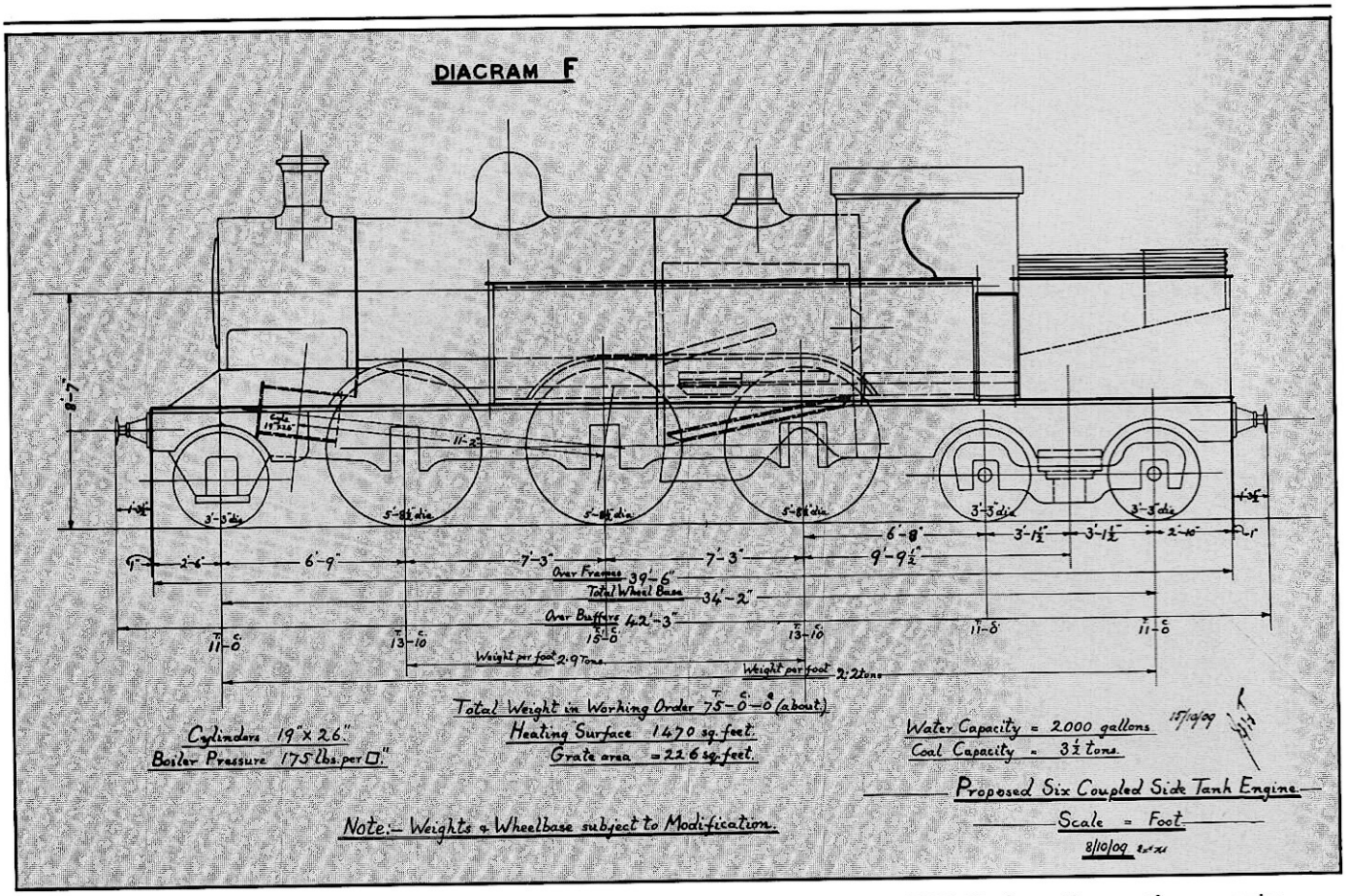


DIAGRAM F
Over Frames 39'-6"
Total Wheel Base 34'-2"
Over Buffers 42'-3"
Weight per foot 2.9 Tons
Weight per foot 2.22 tons
Total Weight in Working Order 75-0-0 (about)
Heating Surface 1470 sq. feet.
Grate area = 22.6 sq. feet.
Cylinders 19"x 26"
Boiler Pressure 175 lbs. per □"
Water Capacity = 2000 gallons
Coal Capacity = 3½ tons
Proposed Six Coupled Side Tank Engine
Scale = Foot
Note:- Weights & Wheelbase subject to Modification.

Original LNWR 2-6-4T proposal (non superheated) of October 1909 following the locomotive exchange trials of that summer. This subsequently emerged as a 4-6-2T. Photo: Crewe collection, NRM, York

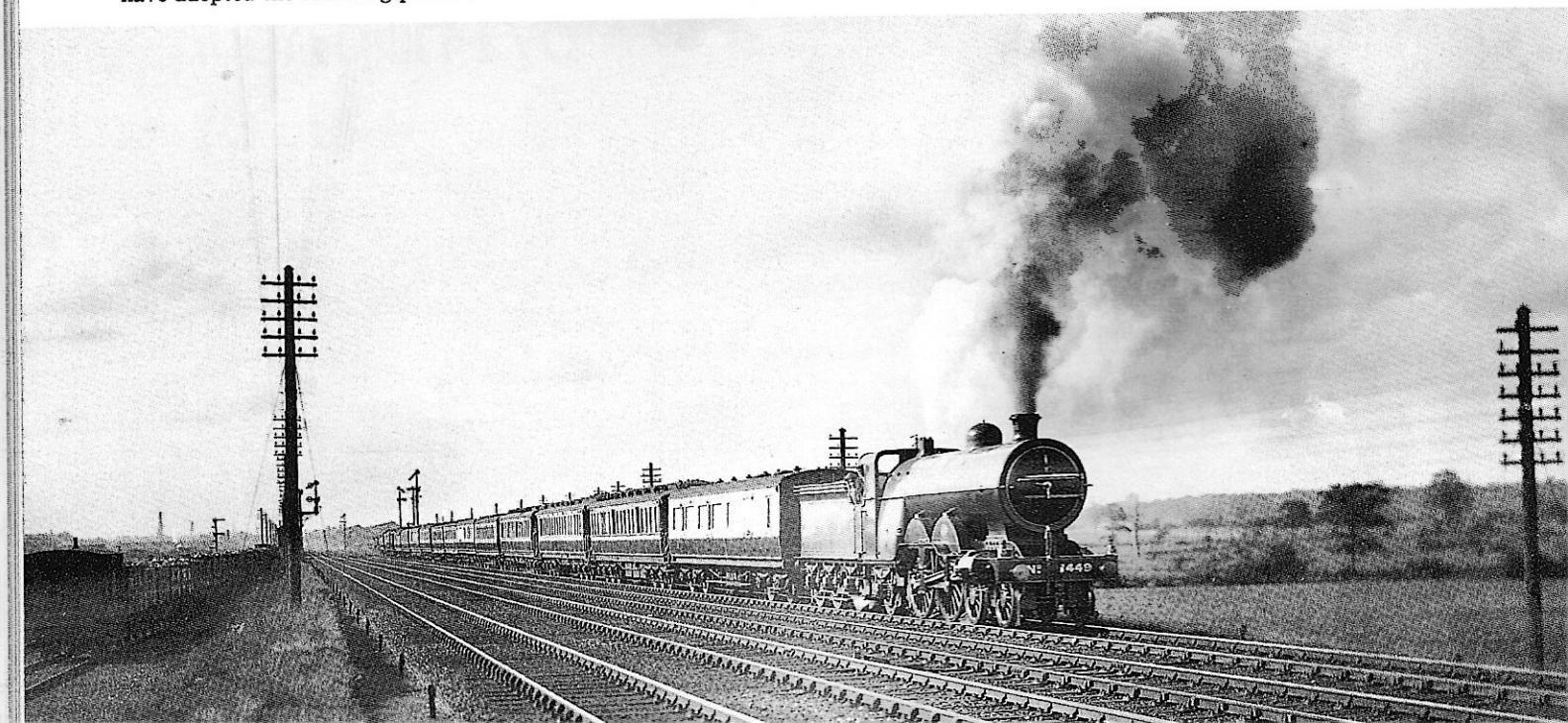
Cooke subsequently drew attention to the closeness of the general results, although the late running of *both* 4-6-0 designs between Carlisle and Glasgow is worth noting! He referred to certain aspects of detailed design which he had noted and concluded his report thus: "In designing the new tank engines, which I have already referred to, and which Mr. Ree (the LNWR General Manager) calls a general utility engine, I have adopted the following points in connection with these trials:-

1. Reversing gear held by a clutch to keep the shafting steady (GN)
2. Extended smokebox (GN)
3. Sloping firebox (Caledonian)
4. Well at bottom of feed tank (Caledonian)
5. Sloping tank and coal bunker (Caledonian)
6. Some improvements in the general arrangements of the footplate (Brighton)

Cooke's summary also referred to Brighton locomotive practice, although through working by a (superheated) London, Brighton and South Coast Railway 4-4-2 tank engine, and an LNWR 'Precursor' between Brighton and Rugby did not actually take place until the following month (November 1909). So dramatic were the economies of fuel and water consumption demonstrated by the Brighton tank engine, of the order of 30% compared with the LNWR 'Precursor', that serious consideration immediately began to be given to superheating at Crewe.

The surviving report itself makes no previous reference to 'the new tank engines', but this assuredly relates to a design scheme for an inside-cylinder 2-6-4T with round-topped firebox dated 8th October 1909, which is immortalised on a glass plate Crewe official negative

Great Northern Railway 4-4-2 1449 works a heavy 14-coach LNWR train south of Crewe on 4th July 1909. Photo: Crewe collection, NRM, York



Caledonian Railway 4-6-0 903 *Cardean* **and LNWR train poses alongside Crewe Works adjacent to the local football ground, on 23rd June 1909.** Photo: Crewe collection, NRM, York

at the National Railway Museum, York. This wheel arrangement was so far unknown on the standard gauge in Britain and was soon discarded in favour of a 4-6-2T with Belpaire firebox, of which twenty were initially authorised in the early new year on 4th February 1910. Eight of these were to be provided with Schmidt superheaters, a bold move. The first LNWR superheated engine actually to *appear*, 4-4-0 2663 *George the Fifth*, was ordered subsequently but appeared earlier (July 1910) because it was a direct development of the existing 'Precursor' type. Even before the first two 4-6-2Ts (non-superheated) appeared in December 1910, a further seventeen engines (an odd total) were ordered in August, all with superheaters, which had all entered service by late 1912. The non-superheated engines were all rebuilt to conform by September 1916, when delivery commenced of a final ten 4-6-2Ts authorised in March 1914.

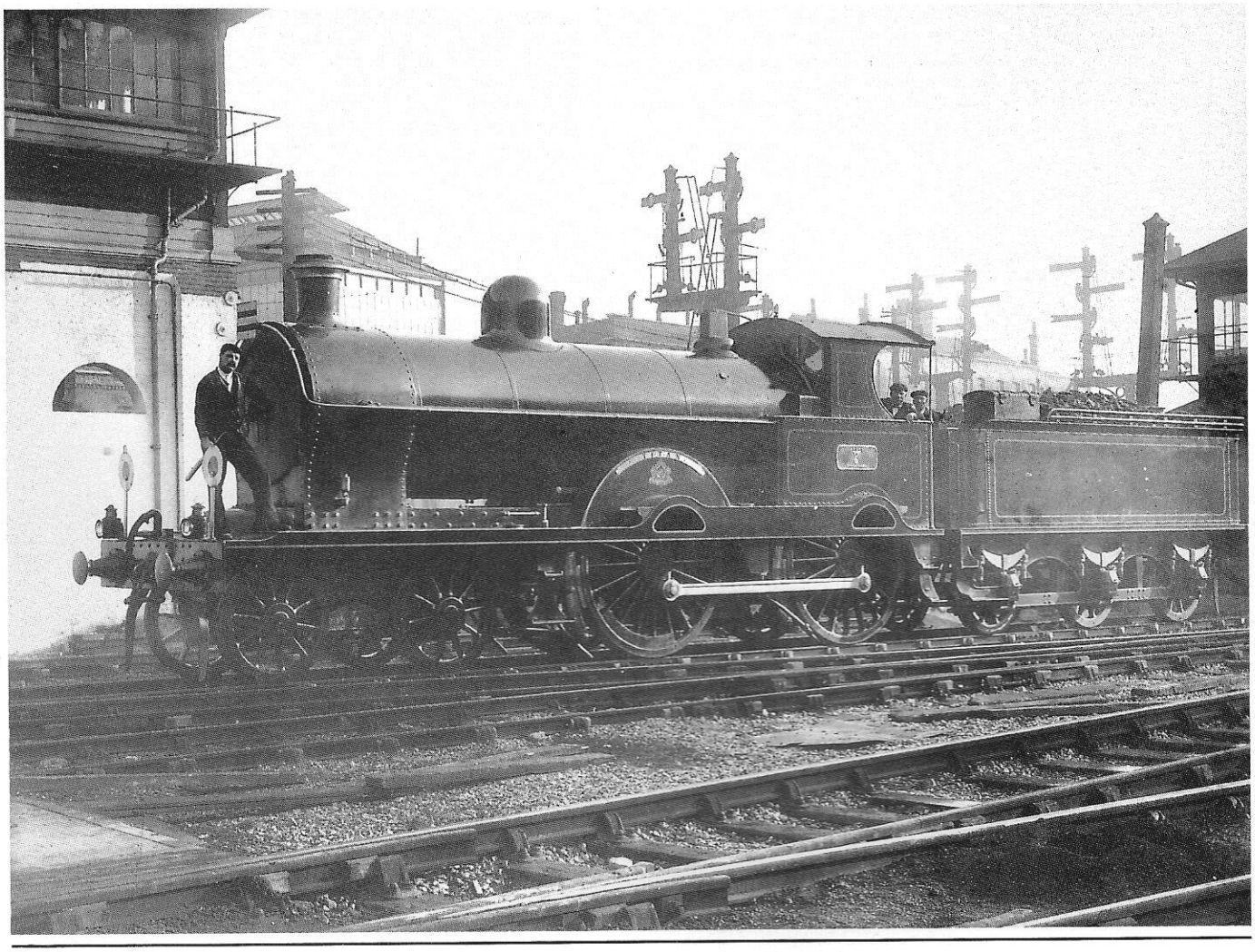
The class was widely scattered and employed on a wide range of duties. Although found in the Birmingham and Manchester districts, in November 1912 for example, units could be found as far afield as Oxenholme, Bletchley, and Swansea. Oxenholme, a sub-shed of Tebay, which later also received an allocation for the same purpose, used its non-superheated engine on banking duties. The superheated Bletchley 4-6-2T was used on outer suburban passenger services from Euston, often achieving 75 mph. At the south western extremities of the LNWR the class had a particularly strong association with the Central Wales line south of Shrewsbury. In January 1928, by which time the class had become LMS 6950 to 6996, eighteen engines were divided between Shrewsbury and Craven Arms alone, although all were transferred elsewhere over the next four years. The boilers on the 4-6-2Ts were carried by no other class, and although no fewer than fifty replacements were made at Crewe between 1928 and 1934, the class was rapidly withdrawn from service between

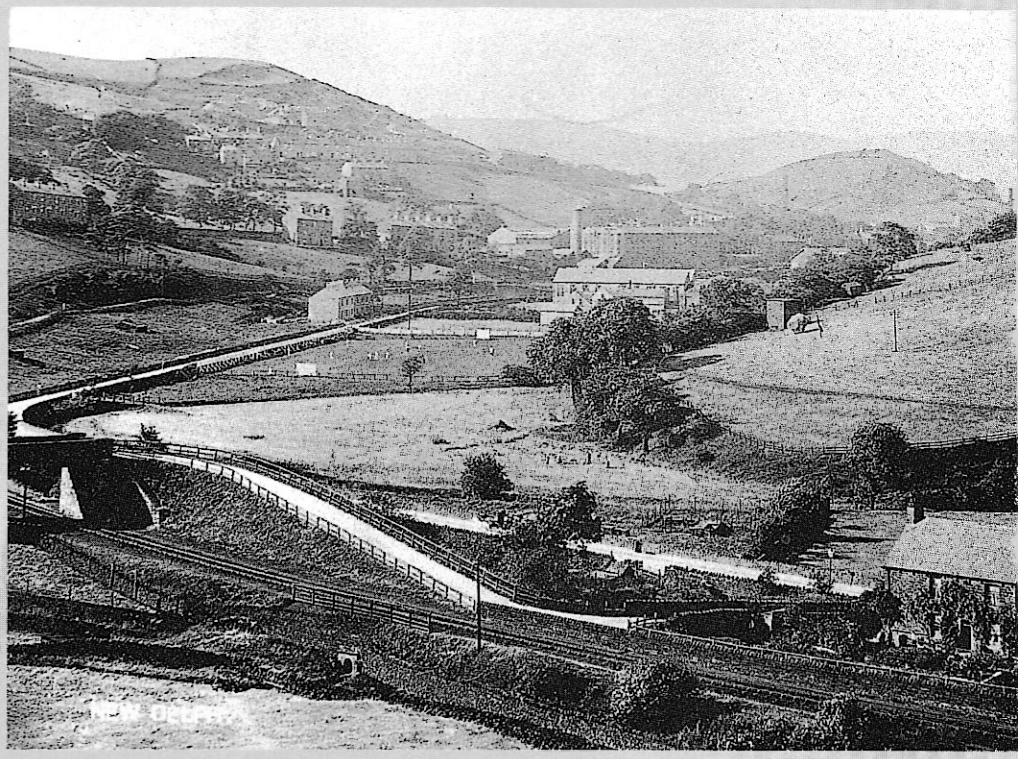
London & North Western Railway 4-6-0 1405 *City of Manchester* **'blows off' at Glasgow Central Station in 1909.** Photo: St Rollox Collection, NRM, York

January 1936 and September 1939, following the advent of the Stanier 2-6-4Ts. Doubtless reprieved by the outbreak of the Second World War a solitary 4-6-2T lasted until April 1941, its origins in the distant summer of 1909 long forgotten.

LNWR 'Prince of Wales' 4-6-0 969 (built 1919) recorded at Lewes at an unknown date, under circumstances which are also unknown. Photo: F. Burtt collection, NRM, York

LNWR 'Precursor' 4-4-0 7 *Titan*, with burnished chimney cap, stands at Brighton, in November 1909. Photo: F. Burtt collection, NRM, York





A view looking north-east from Wall Hill, near Dobcross, at about the turn of the century. The valley of the River Tame imposed a sinuous course on the branch, which can be seen sweeping round to its terminus adjacent to the large Bailey Mill, prominent in the middle distance. In the foreground the lane originally ran over a level crossing, the bridge replacing this at the end of the nineteenth century. The grassy banking to the right of the bridge was later occupied by the short, shelterless platform of Measurements Halt, opened in 1932 to serve a mill of that name which had been built in the fields beyond the house on the right. Photo: Peter Fox collection

The Delph Branch

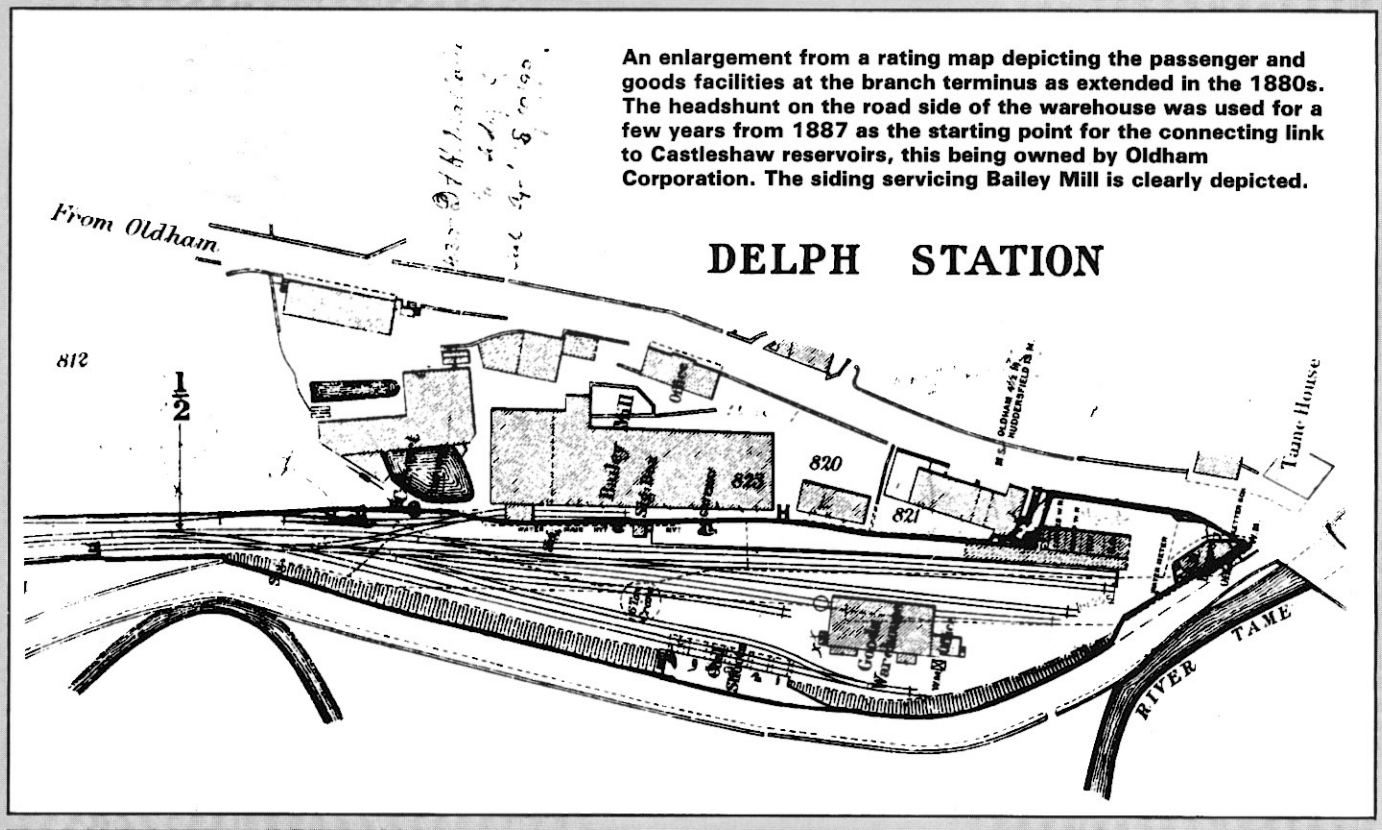
By Michael and Peter FOX

Huddled in the Pennines on the bleak borders of Lancashire and Yorkshire is the village of Delph. In the middle of the nineteenth century it was an unsubstantial, backward place: "There are only a very few mills, round which is scattered a population of small farmers and handloom weavers."[1] Yet the heady enthusiasm of railway promoters in the 1840s was such as to embrace even this remote settlement, with a population of only a few thousand.

Origins and Construction

When the Huddersfield and Manchester Railway and Canal Company obtained authorisation in 1845 to build its main line between Cooper Bridge, near Huddersfield and Stalybridge, the Act[2] included a branch line a little over a mile in length from Brownhill, just west of Standedge tunnel, along the upper valley of the River Tame to Delph.

However, doubts about the likely poor return from investment in the



An enlargement from a rating map depicting the passenger and goods facilities at the branch terminus as extended in the 1880s. The headshunt on the road side of the warehouse was used for a few years from 1887 as the starting point for the connecting link to Castleshaw reservoirs, this being owned by Oldham Corporation. The siding servicing Bailey Mill is clearly depicted.

project gradually developed to undermine it. These reservations were aided by the difficult financial climate which marked the collapse of the national railway promotion boom in the late 1840s. The absorption in 1847 of the Huddersfield and Manchester by the London and North Western Railway also dampened enthusiasm as the new owners were more circumspect about building unremunerative branch lines.

The scheme languished and may well have been quietly forgotten had it not been for local opposition, orchestrated by the prominent Delph textile merchant and manufacturer, James Lees. Lees' perseverance in attempting to persuade the London and North Western to honour its commitment was untiring and ultimately fruitful, as he explained with evident relief to an acquaintance in April, 1850: "We have at length an active commencement of the Branch line of railway from Brownhill to Delph."[3]

Construction was swift and public opening ensued on 1st September 1851. The London and North Western failed to mark the occasion, perhaps having been in no mood to celebrate what it must have regarded as the taking on of a financial liability: "The branch was opened on Monday last. A train consisting of a small engine and three or four carriages plied some half a dozen times between Delph and Saddleworth stations, but with the exception of the large number of passengers who took their fares to the latter place merely for the sake of riding back again, there was nothing remarkable."[4]

Castleshaw, **a Peckett 0-6-0ST seen at the Castleshaw reservoir construction site near Delph, where it was used in the late 1880s.** Photo: Peter Fox collection

Early Services

The initial service comprised four return journeys, Sundays excepted, between Delph and Greenfield. The nearest stopping place to Delph on the main line was Saddleworth station, but reaching this entailed a reversal at Brownhill and hence it appears that the next station up the line was selected instead. There were no intermediate stopping places on the branch.

A seemingly intractable mystery is what was used to haul these first services. Tradition has it that a horse was employed, this allegedly having given rise to the line's long-standing, affectionate train title of 'Delph Donkey'. However, the authors have been unable to find any evidence for horse haulage beyond a reference in the inspecting officer's report of July 1851: "The Directors anticipate such a small amount of both goods and passenger traffic that they have made arrangements for working the line with horse power." But Captain Wynne continues: "Occasions, however, may occur to render it necessary to use an engine, and as there is no turntable at Delph, guards have been fitted to the tender of the engine, which may be called into this service, so as to lessen as much as possible any danger that might arise from working the engine tender foremost."[5]

The early timetables seem also to cast doubt on the use of horse power. In August 1854, for example, the 7.25 pm departure from Delph returned 35 minutes after making the approximately five mile round trip to Greenfield; the 5.17 pm from Delph reappeared only 30 minutes later. Were these timings feasible for a horse drawn train, particularly when reversal and waiting time at Greenfield are taken into account?

and North Western Railway.

ON'S EXCURSIONS. DELPH WAKES.

ONDAY, August 30th, 1897,

CHEAP DAY TICKETS TO

LIVERPOOL

WILL BE ISSUED AS UNDER:—

STATIONS.	Times of Starting. A.M.	FARE—There and Back. THIRD CLASS.
SADDLEWORTH	7-26	
DELPH	7-15	3/-
GREENFIELD	7-30	

Children under 3 years of age, Free: above 3 and under 12, Half Fare.

Returning from Lime Street Station, Liverpool, the same day only at 9-0 p.m.

Tickets and Bills may be obtained of the Booking Clerks at the Stations, and will be available only as shewn above.

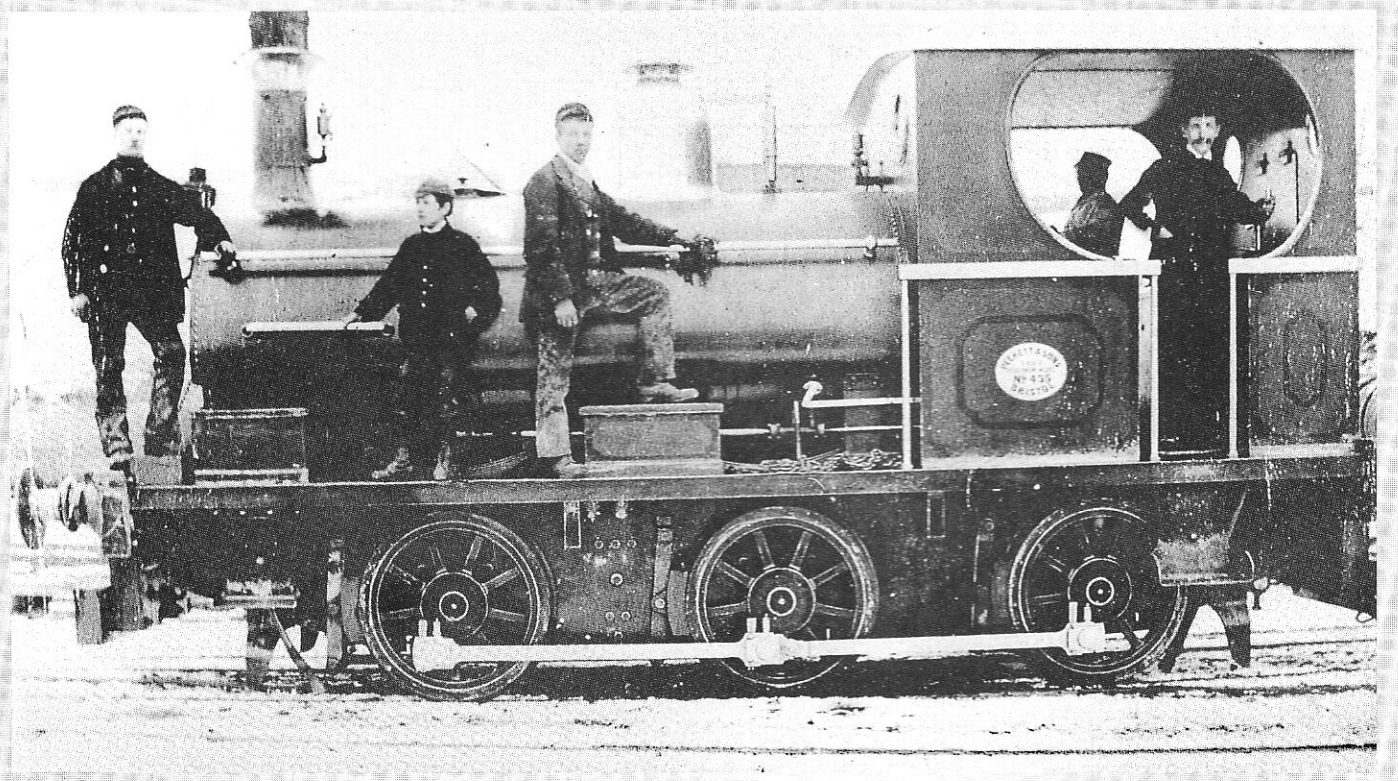
FRED. HARRISON, General Manager.

CHEAP TICKETS are ON SALE at Stanton's Excursion Offices to include Journey from Liverpool Landing Stage to New Brighton and Back, and Admission to New Brighton Tower Grounds ... FARE 9d. Usual Charge 1s.

Whatever they were hauled by, there are few records of passenger journeys on the branch in these early years; but an interesting example dates from August 1852: "The spirit of emigration appears to have taken root among the people of Saddleworth . . . On the morning of Tuesday last five families heretofore residents of Delph took their fares at the . . . station en route for Australia."[6]

1856-1900 Conflict and Expansion

Expanded horizons were opened to the inhabitants of the district by their new railway but for many years they were



frustrated in taking full advantage of these by a stubbornly poor train service.

The first indication of what was to be endured at the hands of the London and North Western came in 1856, paradoxically as a result of that company's further expansion of local facilities. On 4th July a branch was opened from Greenfield to Oldham and the working of the Delph line was combined with that of the new route. Although a wider range of destinations was thus opened to passengers from Delph they had little cause to celebrate as by the following year the already meagre service on their branch had been halved to a paltry two trains in each direction, albeit running to and from Oldham.

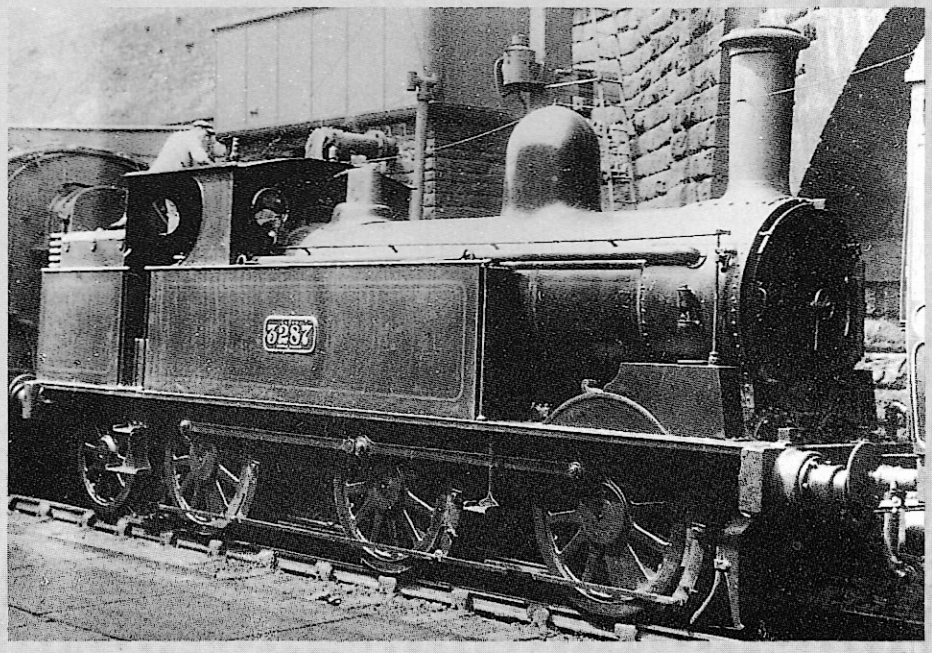
The next few decades were enlivened by a series of skirmishes between the railway company and the local inhabitants, as public dissatisfaction over the service was brought to bear through protest meetings and petitions. This process of organised complaint was often attended by success. In 1879, for example: "The inhabitants of Delph have reason for congratulation on the ready response on the part of the company to their petition for improved railway services between Delph and Greenfield."(7)

Three extra trains had been the reward for this plucky opposition.

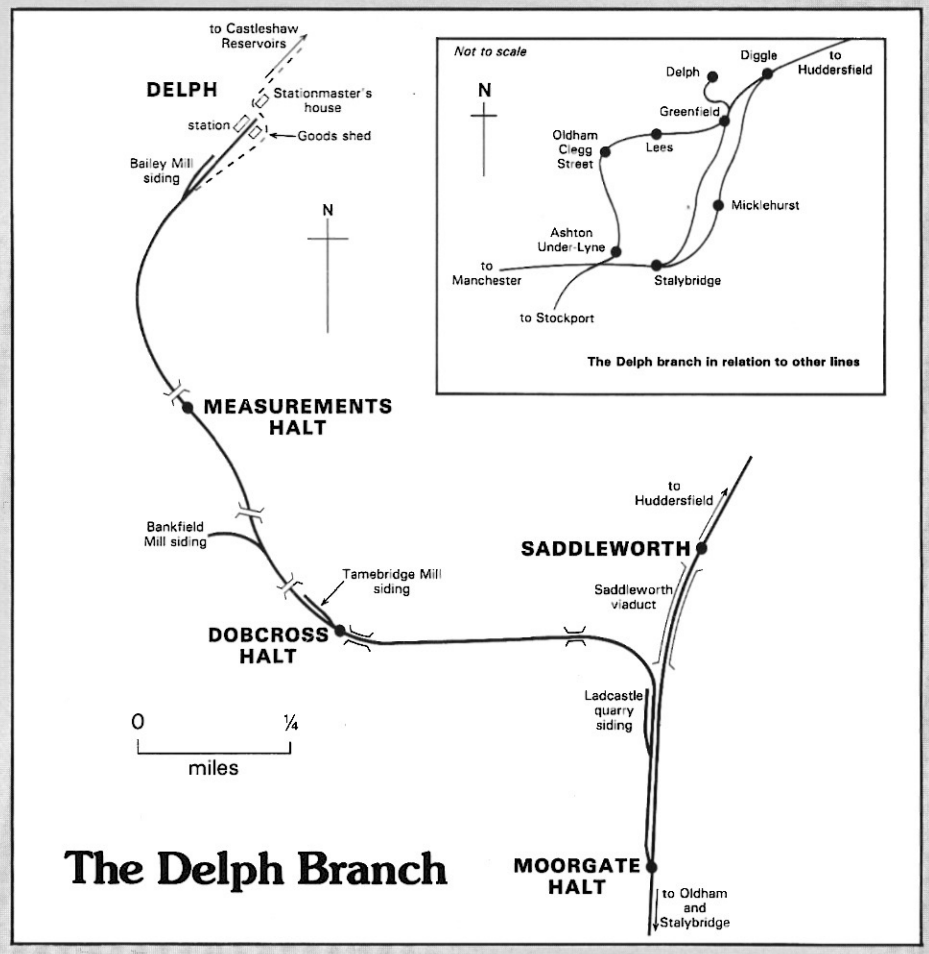
Similar unity and resolve were evident in 1888 when the company quietly withdrew the 7.20 am Delph to Greenfield service. On 2nd November, the villagers packed the local Mechanics Institute and displayed 'a remarkable unanimity of feeling,' expressed in a petition signed by: "... every person of importance in the neighbourhood, as well as by most of the tradespeople ... Everbody seemed willing and anxious to sign the document and if the railway authorities pay no heed to it they will be setting at nought the wishes of the whole community."(8) Confronted by such implacable opposition the company speedily reinstated the suspended train from 1st December.

The great improvement of the station facilities at Delph may also have been due to persistent and energetic lobbying by the inhabitants. By 1879 the spartan and badly planned arrangements had incensed the locals into holding yet another protest meeting, from which a memorial of itemised grievances emerged: "We the inhabitants of Delph humbly memorialise your honourable board to take into consideration the inadequate arrangements ... with regard to passenger accommodation at Delph station.

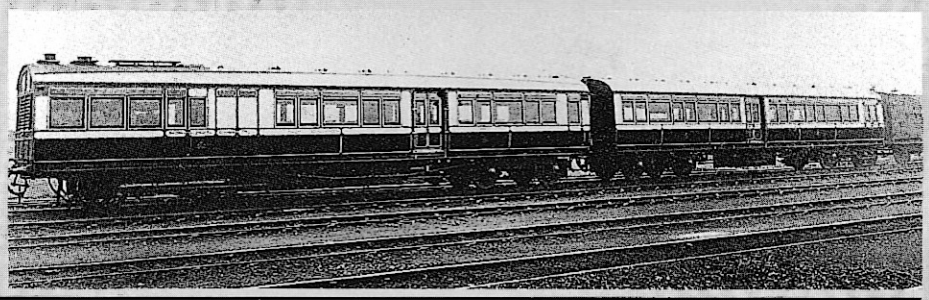
1. The approach to the station is through the goods yard, passengers having to thread their way between a number of carts, horses, lurries and we ask therefore for an improvement in this.
2. Your memorialists have to make an especial complaint of the want of a ladies' waiting room. There is but one general waiting room and that is a thoroughfare for everyone ....
3. The platform is very short, and the trains cannot draw up clear on account



LNWR 0-6-2 'Coal' Tank 3287 on a push-pull working from Oldham Clegg Street at Greenfield c.1915. Photo: L. Hirst



The steam railmotor used on the branch around 1910 seen at Lees depot, Oldham. Photo: F. Shuttleworth collection



of the goods wagons which have to be unloaded in the warehouse having to be put into this siding which is a source of great danger . . . "[9]

New and extended station buildings, improved warehouse facilities and a more spacious layout at the terminus were the company's ultimate answer to such pressure late in the next decade.

Arousing less opposition was the company's policy of catering for leisure travel. From 1854, and probably earlier, Delph station became the regular starting point for a great number and variety of special trains, many operating during the annual 'wakes' holiday when the local mills shut down in unison and their workers flocked out of the district in search of pleasure.

Destinations of the wakes excursions were far flung, although Blackpool and Belle Vue pleasure gardens in Manchester predominated. More adventurous spirits were able to take advantage of outings such as that in the 1891 wakes: ". . . a large number of trippers went away to Liverpool to see the Manchester Ship Canal and view the wonders of docks, shipping and river traffic."[10]

The regular hiring of trains by societies and institutions added to this steady flow of excursion traffic. In 1875, to select one of numerous examples, 300 participants in the quarterly conference of the Temperance Union arrived at Delph by special train. [11] Often the sheer beauty of the Pennine uplands that surround the district was sufficient to draw hundreds of trippers from the murk of the nearby Lancashire towns. In July 1898, for instance, a party of 800 Oldham school children alighted at Delph: "to enjoy the splendid scenery and the refreshing breezes."[12]

Slipshod working practices and mishaps cast the occasional shadow on this general variety and improvement. In 1888 a contemporary described the homespun method of running round trains at Delph. The locomotive would first push the coaches clear of the platform, then detach and cross to the adjacent goods line: " . . . then a long thick rope would be attached from the first carriage to the engine which would pull them along. After going some twenty yards or so the porter would give the rope a good pull and the train would go down to the platform leaving room for the engine to pass and so pull them forward and link up ready for the away again."[13]

This hazardous practice was later outlawed by the company's rule book.

During the same year an unusual mishap began at Delph station: "The collision on the Delph line on Saturday was another illustration of the many mischievous freaks of youth. The carriages were as usual standing by the station platform when the lad, Barlow, went and took off the brakes." The coaches rolled back down the steep gradient at the approach to the terminus, finally coming to a violent halt in Tamewater cutting when they met a light engine returning from Greenfield: "The brakevan and the first carriages were broken to atoms, and the engine and several other carriages were seriously damaged."[14] Fortunately, serious accidents were virtually unknown on the branch, this example being a spectacular exception.

The driver of Fowler 2-6-2T 40060 takes the tablet for the Delph branch c.1950. Photo: J. Davenport

From the earliest years the branch seems to have been served by just one daily freight working, but the sparseness of goods trains belies the considerable importance of this traffic to the line. The growing number of steam driven textile factories that rose imposingly in the local area used the branch as a means for bringing in their coal and wool and dispatching finished goods.

Records of this vital but humdrum activity are uncommon, but a ledger survives that details wagon arrivals at Delph between 16th November 1895 and 18th August the following year. Despite the exclusion of vehicles carrying coal, probably a sizeable number, the substantial total of 1,699 wagons is listed. It is likely that a proportion would have been empty, but even after making allowance for this and the small capacity of wagons of the period, it is evident that many thousands of tons of freight were being handled at Delph yard each year.[15]

Traffic at the terminus was supplemented by that to and from intermediate sidings. In addition to the private spur serving Bailey Mill, which was adjacent to the terminus, there were ultimately three of these. Opening dates are hard to ascertain, but that at Bankfield Mill, Dobcross was in use well before the end of the last century.

Nearby Bridge Mill siding can be dated to very early in the branch's existence by several references. In 1860 for example, a local paper reported that

Fowler 2-6-2T 40060 and train at Moorgate Halt c.1950, having just come off the Delph branch (behind the photographer). Photo: J. Davenport

the coal chutes there had collapsed, having: "from heavy use and exposure to the weather become somewhat impaired". Stone and shale began to leave the siding at Ladcastle Quarries, hard by the junction with the main line at Brownhill around the same date.

Some mixed trains were operated, providing relief for the daily freight. This expedient was being employed from an early date. In 1859 a newspaper recorded that a passenger train had been able to draw up short of rockfall at Tamewater due to its slow speed following the depositing of a wagon at Bridge Mill siding. Working timetables also record mixed workings. In 1880, for instance, the 5.20 pm Delph to Stockport passenger was scheduled "to convey sheeted wagons from Delph to Greenfield."[16]

Perhaps the peak of the branch's freight operations came in the few years ensuing the 1887 commencement of the Castleshaw Reservoirs near Delph. To feed this project with construction materials, Oldham Corporation built a line from an end on junction with a siding in Delph yard. This link, which first squeezed between the stationmaster's house and the station buildings before running incongruously up Huddersfield Road, was traversed by several trains a day, each hauled by a diminutive contractor's locomotive.

1900-1954 Zenith and Decline

By the start of the new century the habitual confrontation between the operators and the users of the branch appears to have subsided. Perhaps the reason for this was the steady expansion of the passenger service, conducted by the London and North Western despite the absence of the spurs of protest meetings and petitions. The gradual rise in the population of the district was presumably the basis of this growth, which by 1905 had brought ten Delph-Oldham return workings on weekdays and eleven by 1910.

Despite its new mood for steady development of the service the London and North Western remained conscious of a need to operate the branch as cheaply as possible. A tangible sign of this intention soon made its appearance. 5507 was a steam railmotor paired with an unpowered trailer and for a short time from July 1910 ran trials on the branch. A proneness to mechanical defects and a rumoured propensity to inflict sweltering heat on its passengers, seem to have rendered its stint on the line less than successful.

The concept of more economical working by substituting a new type of train had, however, been broached by the trials. In October 1910 we receive an indication of future plans. A meeting that month of Saddleworth Council heard an assurance from the company that it was 'prepared to consider the advisability of making Moorgate and Tamewater stopping places for its motor trains'.[17]

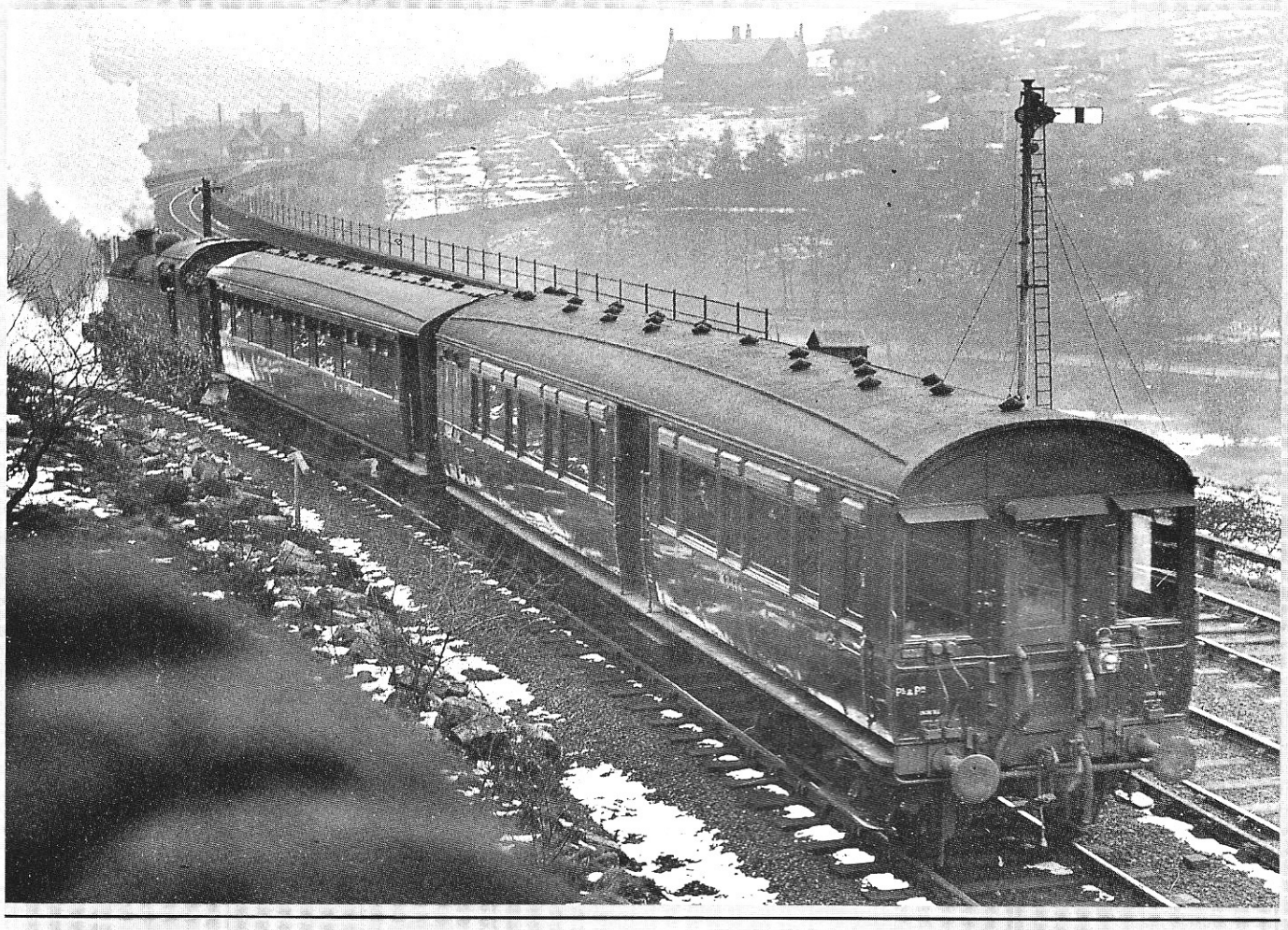
'Push and pull' operation was duly introduced in January 1912, the 'motor trains' from Oldham Clegg Street to Delph calling at the two places advocated by the council. Moorgate Halt's unstaffed timber platforms and shelters flanked the Stalybridge-Huddersfield line immediately south of Delph Junction, where the branch had diverged since its extension south from Brownhill in the 1880s. Dobcross Halt (this name having been adopted in preference to Tamewater) was a single platform and shelter of identical design to Moorgate Halt and was sited adjacent to the siding serving Bridge Mill on the outskirts of its namesake village.

Some further expansion accompanied the introduction of the new trains; by 1914 the weekday total of services from Oldham to Delph was thirteen, with twelve workings departing the terminus for either Greenfield or Oldham.

This period also saw an increase in the already brisk excursion traffic over the branch. The figures of bookings made at Delph during the week long wakes holiday of August 1906, to take a representive example, give some notion of the volume of trippers being dealt with: Belle Vue 375, Blackpool 174, Liverpool 100, Morecambe 27, Scarborough 11, Yorkshire Coast 20, North Wales and Chester 26, Ireland 2, 'Eastern Counties' 2 (total 737).[18]

In addition, freight traffic continued to be heavy at this time, despite the ending of deliveries to the coal siding at Bridge Mill in about 1909 (Ladcastle Quarry siding was to close approximately ten years later); a

A Delph-Oldham train is propelled off the branch in February 1950 by a Fowler 2-6-2T. Photo: J. Davenport



40059 at the buffer stops at Delph. Behind the locomotive and the wooden canopy are the twin gables marking the original station building which formed the nucleus of the extended passenger facilities constructed during the 1880s.
Photo: J. Davenport

tattered pile of old telegram slips, discovered when Delph Junction signal box was demolished, provides an insight into the scale of this freight activity on the eve of the First World War.

One telegram communicated that on 9th April 1912 a total of 69 wagons was to be found on the branch, 45 of these being in the yard at Delph and twelve each at Bankfield and Ladcastle Quarry sidings. This would suggest a healthy level of traffic, although how many of the wagons were empty, or being used for storage, is not recorded.

Another slip from 28th August 1911, highlights the importance of the branch as a first link in an export chain for the finished goods of the local textile factories. The Delph stationmaster was directed to: "... accept shipping goods for Liverpool, Southampton, also London ... You can freight Garston traffic."

The smooth operation of this traffic was, however, prone to disruption by day-to-day problems. A telegram dated 19th April 1912 outlines the consequences of one of these at Delph: "At 8.35 am, five empty coal wagons derailed in siding caused by wagon running back out of No.1 and coming in contact with train moving out of No.2 siding. No injuries ... Curtailment of passenger trains 9.45 am at Greenfield and 10.05 am at Delph."[19]

The inter-war years saw the number of passenger trains continue to rise; by August 1933 the Mondays to Fridays service comprised 22 trains between Greenfield and Delph with 21 in the reverse direction, most of these originating from or travelling to Oldham Clegg Street. The 7.14 and 7.50 am from Oldham and the 5.33 pm from Delph called at Measurements Halt, a tiny, shelterless platform of basic construction. This had opened on 18th March the previous year to serve a mill of this name midway between Dobcross Halt and the terminus.

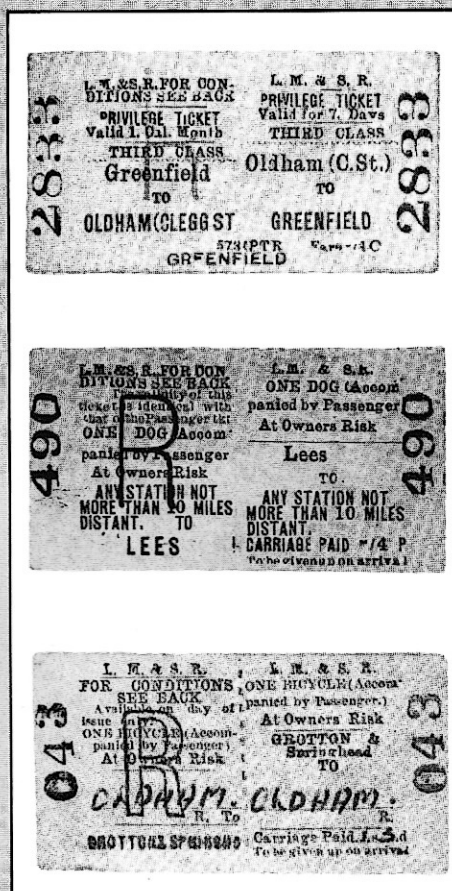
These evidences of continued growth could not, however, obscure a gathering threat to the service, first apparent in the 1920s. The danger emanated from a developing network of competing bus services.

The railway company, since 1923 the London Midland and Scottish, reacted by slashing fares on the branch. In 1925, for example, passengers using afternoon trains for the twelve mile round trip to Oldham were able to buy a cheap rate return ticket costing a mere 8d (3½p).

Similar tactics were employed to combat the threat of charabanc firms abstracting the lucrative excursion traffic. In 1936, for example, we hear that: "possibly never in its history has the railway company placed better, cheaper and more commodious facilities before its patrons than during Saddleworth wakes holidays."[20]

Substance is given to this claim by details of excursions being operated that August. A special outing to Blackpool cost 4s 6d (22½p), one to Southport 3s 6d (17½p), whilst Llandudno could have been reached by a return trip priced at 5s 6d (27½p). The latter works out at approximately three miles per pre-decimal penny.

Despite such enterprise, decline was beginning to loom at this period. The



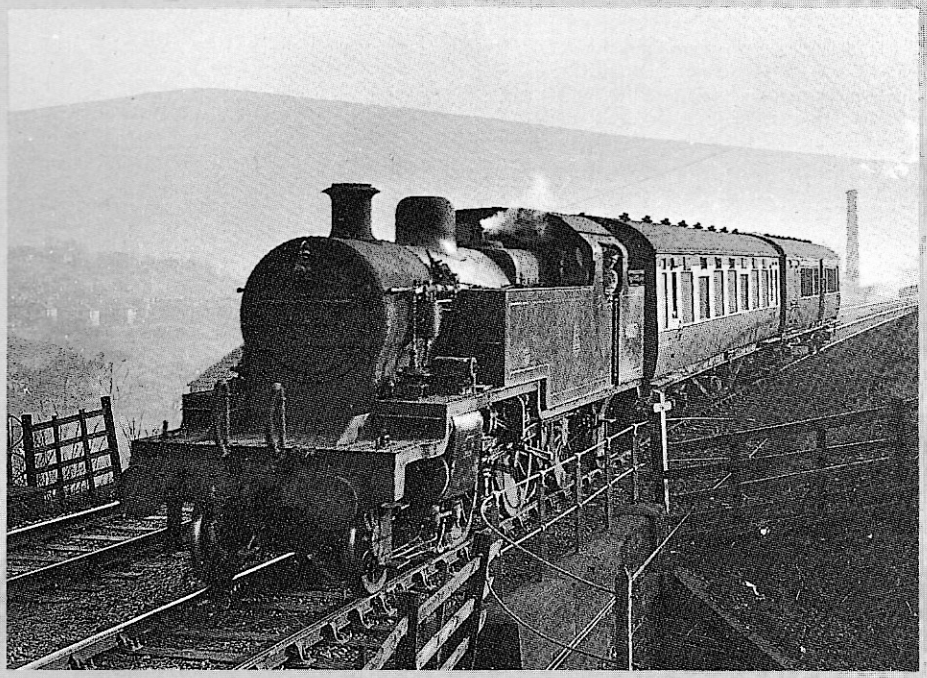
J. Leeson

next few years marked a downturn in the previously frantic passenger activity. The excursion traffic suddenly disappeared at the outbreak of the Second World War, never to return, whilst the regular service began a steady contraction, an ominous portent of the future. In 1940, for example, there were eighteen return Mondays to Fridays workings along the branch, a reduction on the 1933 timetable.

The end of the war was not marked by a reversal of this trend: by the summer of 1954 the timetable could only offer fourteen return journeys on Mondays to Fridays, some of these terminating at or commencing from Greenfield.

Despite these adverse signs there was a miraculous innovation at the eleventh hour. In the summers of 1953 and 1954 the line's first ever Sunday service operated, nine return Oldham-Delph trains on a basically hourly afternoon and evening headway breaking the previous Sabbath calm.[21]

The branch's freight traffic failed to benefit from any such last minute stimulus. The daily goods continued to run beyond the Second World War; in 1953, for example, it departed Oldham Glodwick Road at 8.55 am, Saturdays excepted and returned from Delph at 11.00 am to terminate at Lees on the outskirts of Oldham. But its traffic had by now dwindled to a few wagon loads, largely of coal for domestic and industrial use at Delph. Within a couple of years this humble working would constitute the sole traffic on the Delph branch.



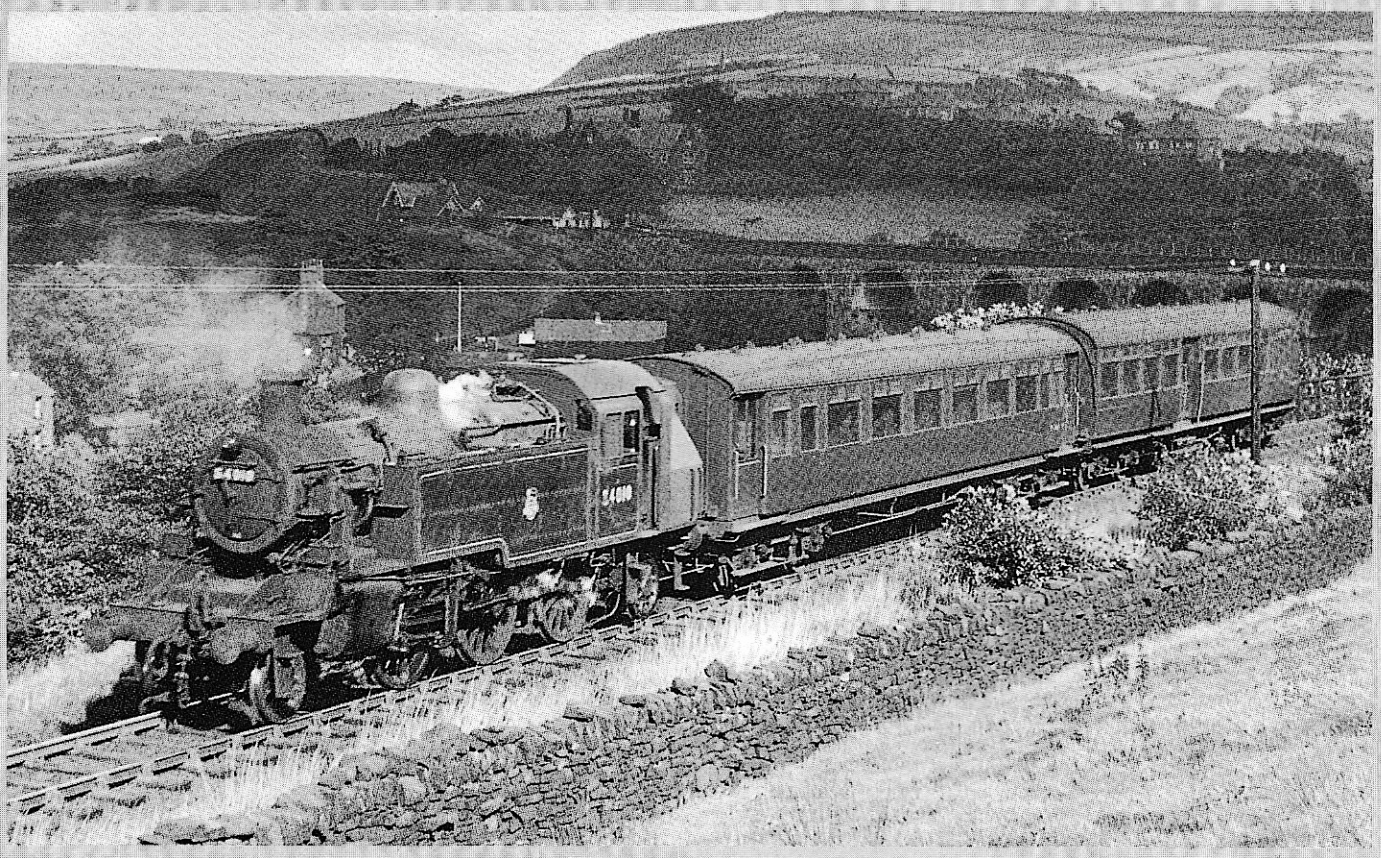
40047 on the main line just north of Greenfield and about to call at Moorgate Halt with an Oldham-Delph train c.1952. Photo: J. Davenport

Last Rites and Final Closure

On 9th March 1955 the Delph branch was on the agenda of a meeting of the North West Transport Users' Consultative Committee. British Railways, operator of the line since 1948, was seeking permission to close it, citing its alleged annual loss of £28,000 as grounds.

The chairman's pronoucement was perhaps inevitable: "The committee has decided to support British Railways in the view that the train services should be withdrawn."

The axe fell quickly. On Saturday, 30th April 1955 Ivatt 2-6-2 tank 41281 steamed out of Clegg Street station with the last departure from Oldham, the 11.10 pm to Delph. The train's normal load was some sixty passengers, but driver Edward Richards and fireman Harold Freeman found themselves in charge of ten times that number, squeezed into four coaches. The atmosphere on the train's arrival at Delph was charged by a crowd of cheering, 'Auld Lang Syne' — singing spectators, who besieged the train crew for autographs.



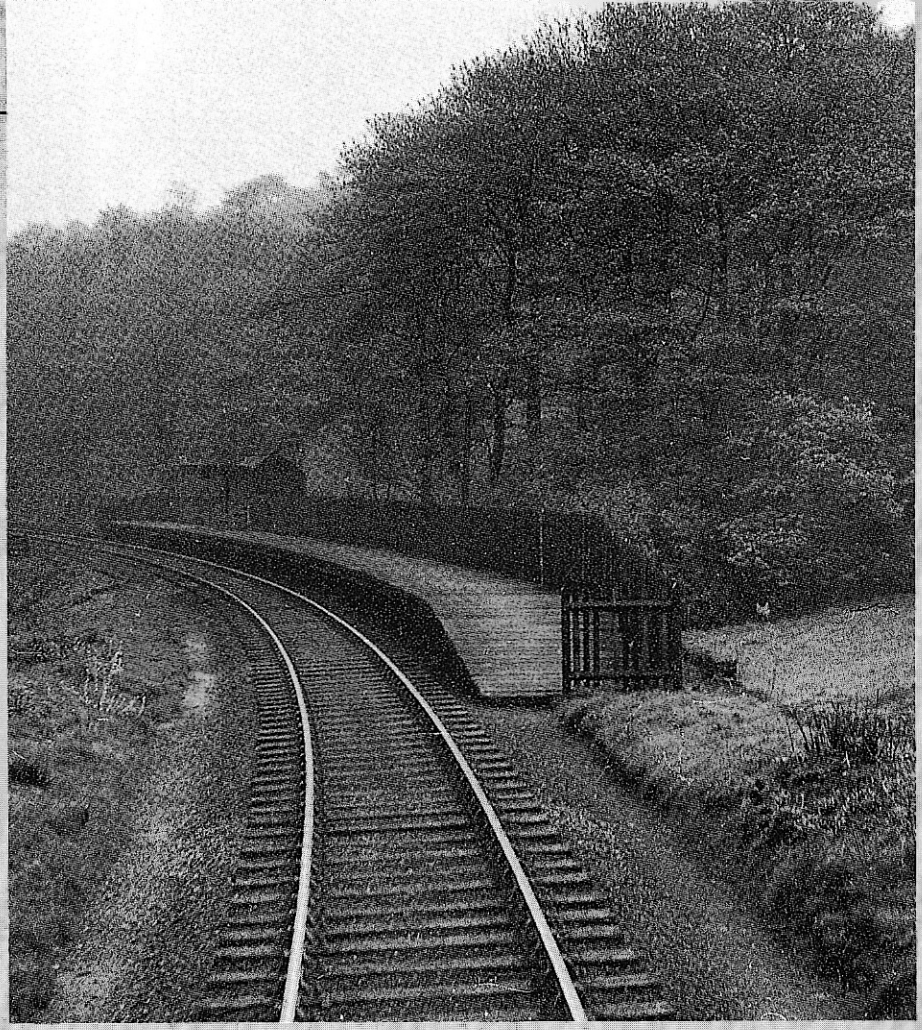
Shortly before the cessation of passenger services, 84010 pushes a Delph-Oldham train near Dobcross. Photo: J. Davenport

So great was the tide of enthusiasm that the train, instead of running empty to Lees depot as normal, carried its passengers back to Oldham. When it left, at midnight, it thus became the final normal service passenger train to leave Delph and also the last to pass the halts at Measurements, Dobcross and Moorgate, which accompanied the terminus station into oblivion.

The residual freight traffic remained to keep the rails from rusting entirely, but the goods working lost its daily frequency. A brief revival of former days came on 12th May 1956 when what a local paper engagingly described as "a bizarre trainload of antiquarians" traversed the branch aboard the 'Old Manchester Railtour' of the Stephenson and Manchester Locomotive Societies.

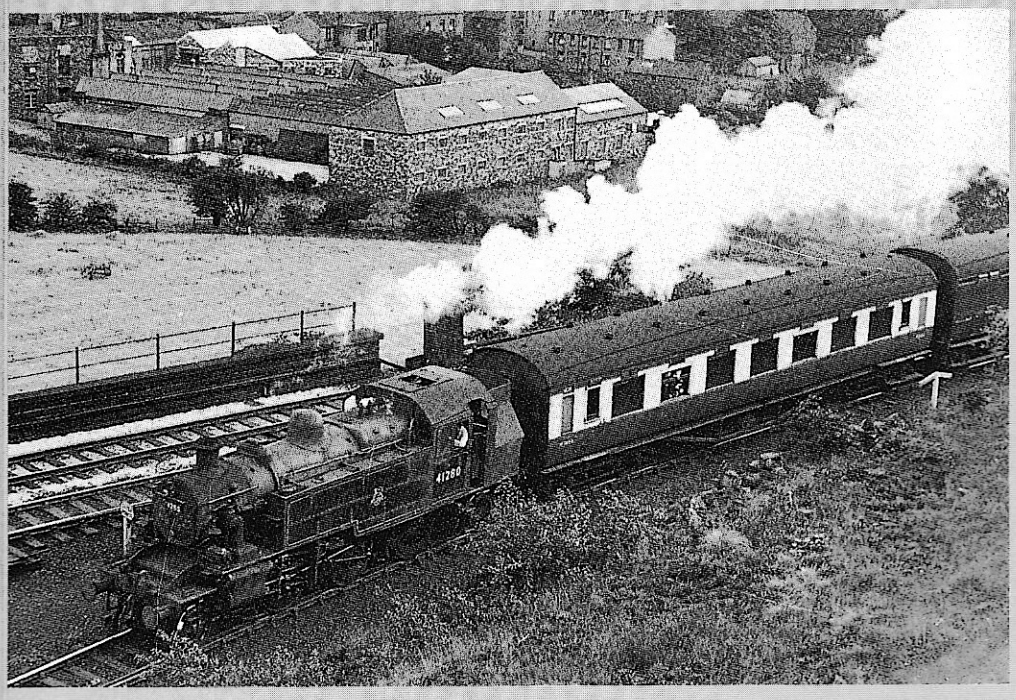
The sheer paucity of traffic on the line ensured it a final moment of glory. On 22nd June 1960, gleaming locomotives and luxurious rolling stock entered the branch, to remain for a few hours near Dobcross Halt. The Queen Mother was travelling between engagements at York and Chester and the half-forgotten backwater of the Delph branch furnished an ideal overnight resting place for the Royal Train.

The final end came on 4th November 1963 when total closure was effected. The line had been killed by the cessation of a contract for carrying coal to the Bailey Mill siding at Delph, the only other user of the by now weekly freight train, the Delph Cooperative Society, easily being able to make arrangements for receiving its coal by road. By August 1964 the trackwork had been lifted, whilst Moorgate and Dobcross halts had by this date been completely erased and Measurements Halt was disappearing under a thicket of bushes.



The small and spartan Dobcross Halt photographed in the early 1950s from the driving compartment of a push-pull set. Photo: J. Davenport

In 1970 an attempt was made to revive some of the vanished atmosphere at Delph. An ex-British Rail coach arrived that September to take up position in the platform as a restroom for the sauna baths which had opened in the station building. The following year a steam shunting engine from Hartshead Power Station near Stalybridge and a few wagons were added. By 1974 two hundred yards of track had been relaid and on 5th May the locomotive was steamed along this. But, regrettably, plans to regularly operate the engine and stock ultimately failed and the prospect of the spirit of the Delph Donkey being raised again has receded.



Ivatt 2-6-2T 41280 begins to curve away from the Stalybridge-Huddersfield line at the southern tip of Saddleworth viaduct. Photo: J. Davenport

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17. *'SADDLEWORTH REPORTER', 29th October 1910.*
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20. *'SADDLEWORTH REPORTER', 14th August 1936.*
21. *Although the authors have seen printed timetables as evidence for these trains, some doubt has been expressed that they infact operated.*

YESTERDAY'S OBSERVER

APRIL 1958

A busy time, increased modernisation but still newly built steam locomotives — and some closures/accidents. From the RCTS journal 'Railway Observer'

BRITISH RAILWAYS

CAR-SLEEPER SERVICES. Several extensions to the above facilities are planned for 1958 Summer season. From the N.E. Region 58 car-sleeper trains will be run (30 in 1957) comprising a Saturday service from Newcastle to Exeter, a mid-week train from Newcastle and York to Boulogne and a Friday service from York and Newcastle to Inverness. These services are known respectively as the West Country, Continental and Highlands Car-Sleepers.

The popular Perth Car-Sleeper Limited will again run from Kings Cross every night except Fridays between 3rd May and 4th October. The service will also operate on Wednesdays and Saturdays during April.

On the Western Region, in addition to the Paddington-St. Austell service introduced in 1956, there will be a week-day car-sleeper service between Paddington and Newton Abbot from 2nd April till 11th October (4th and 7th April excepted).

Commencing early in May a new car-sleeper service from Glasgow to Eastbourne will be introduced. Arrival at Eastbourne will be 7.35 am (MWF) and departure at 8.42 pm (MWS).

LONDON MIDLAND REGION

RUGBY. New 3-car diesel sets have been running from Leicester, apparently instructing drivers, arriving at 1.20 pm and returning at about 1.35 pm. On 12th March, 50305/59116/50323 appeared and on 19th March 50326/59119/50308. D8000 and D8003, coupled with cabs at the outer ends, were noted hauling up freight trains on 17th and 20th March, passing Rugby between 1.30 pm and 2.45 pm.

WESTERN REGION

SWINDON. On 16th March under construction were Cl. 9F 2-10-0s 92190 (complete), 92191 (frames and cylinders set up), 92192 (frames laid). 0-4-0 DM shunters D2013-6 (complete and painted), D2017/8 (complete not painted), D2019 (motors fitted), D2020-3 (frames laid). The bodywork seems to be completed on D800-2 and a Maybach engine was standing alongside D800. D600 *Active* was in its usual place between the straight road and the roundhouse of the running shed.

SUMMER SERVICES. A new service of cross-country diesel trains will be inaugurated between Birmingham and Cardiff, via Stourbridge Junction, Worcester, Hereford and Newport. Trains will leave Birmingham at 8.00 am, 10.00 am, 12 noon, 1.00 pm, 5.40 pm and 8.00 pm and Cardiff at 7.40 am, 8.35 am, 10.40 am, 12.42 pm and 6.40 pm. Journey times vary from 3 hours 10 minutes to 3 hours 28 minutes. There are also additional early-morning and late-evening trains from Hereford to Cardiff and Birmingham. The Birmingham-Cardiff inter-city diesel services via Stratford and Gloucester have been slightly decelerated, due to additional stops being made (mainly at Stratford and Cheltenham) and there are now no non-stop runs between Gloucester and Birmingham.

New express diesel services will also run between Oxford and Birmingham. The fastest of these will leave Oxford at 11.20 am, calling only at Banbury, Leamington and Warwick, and arriving at Birmingham at 12.51 pm. The 23 miles from Oxford to Banbury will be run in 25 minutes start to stop, and the 20 miles from Banbury to Leamington in 22 minutes, both "fastest-ever" timings. There will also be a through diesel train from Didcot to Wolverhampton, leaving at 7.04 am and calling at most stations. The return working leaves Wolverhampton at 4.40 pm.

SOUTHERN REGION

CALAMITY CORNER. The SR continues to have more than its share of mishaps. An Eastern section electric train stalled at London Bridge during the morning rush on 28th February; on the following day, Saturday, 1st March, 31895, hauling the 2.02 pm from Dover Priory, ran out of steam as it was crossing Swanley Junction. Within twelve minutes it had blocked the paths of five trains — up Sevenoaks to Holborn, down Holborn to Sevenoaks, up Gillingham to Victoria, up Maidstone to Victoria, and down Victoria to Maidstone/Gillingham. The following Monday, 3rd March, was marked by a points failure at Sevenoaks.

On 4th March a more serious mishap occurred at Gloucester Road Junction, Croydon, when the 12.55 pm West Croydon-Victoria electric was rammed and partly overturned by the 9.41 am Brighton-London Bridge parcels. Six passengers in the electric train were slightly injured. The driver of the parcels train stated at the subsequent inquiry that he had misread signals. The electric set involved was 4300 and the parcels train engine 31867.

On the next day a morning business train failed at Lancing and a broken rail on the up local line at Earlsfield resulted in some up trains being diverted via East Putney. On 7th March a track circuit failure at Staines caused up to twenty minutes delay to morning rush-hour trains.

After a ten-day respite, 17th March was distinguished by three incidents, all during the morning rush-hour. These were a points failure at Gillingham, a signal failure at Salfords (near Redhill) and a broken rail on the up Windsor line between Clapham Junction and Queen's Road.

EASTERN REGION

DONCASTER WORKS. Locomotives ex-Plant after heavy overhaul are: February — D3077, 60041/51, 60516, 61641/7, 61844/87, 61917, 62067, 63963, 70010; March — 60031/3, 60119/42/50, 60522/3, 61077, 61139, 61670, 61840/1/69, 62020/47, 63957/76, 68944/70/1, 69533, 70003. Ex-works dates of new diesel shunters are D3608 28th February, D3609/10/1 1st, 8th, 12th March. On 15th March D3652-9 and E5000/1 were in hand. The latter will be 2,500 hp electric locomotives of Bo-Bo wheel arrangement (see also p.78, March *R.O.*).

D200, the first of the English Electric 2,000 hp diesel-electric locomotives for the ER, was on acceptance trials at Doncaster Works during w/e 15th March. The D5500 series of diesels currently being delivered from Brush also visit Doncaster prior to taking up duty at Stratford shed.

BARNSLEY. After much rumour the diesel service has at last been instituted between Barnsley and Leeds, commencing on 3rd March. As with other diesel operated services, the public have shown a keen interest, so much so that on 8th March five and six car sets, instead of the usual three were used.

According to the local press during the first week of operation the number of passengers carried represented an increase of 900%. Rather ironically on the inaugural run was the General Manager of the Yorkshire Traction Omnibus Co Ltd, who had been invited together with a number of civic dignitaries.

NORTH EASTERN REGION

NORTHALLERTON-HAWES BRANCH. Two passenger trains were run on the Wensleydale branch on 26th February when roads were blocked by snow and 'buses were not available.

The first train left Northallerton at 7.20 am hauled by a BR 2MT 2-6-0 calling at all stations to Hawes and returned later in the morning.

A second train, similarly hauled, left Northallerton at 3.50 pm and returned from Hawes at 8.03 pm.

CLOSURE OF STATIONS. Leeds City Council have accepted a proposal from the BTC to close both the High and Low Level stations at Holbeck. It is understood that the closure is not imminent but will take place under the Modernisation Plan following the closing of Leeds Central station and the transfer of its traffic to Leeds City.

The Scarborough-Middlesbrough line is to be closed between Whitby West Cliff and Loftus after the last train on 3rd May and on the 5th May a service via Battersby will be commenced using diesel railcars.

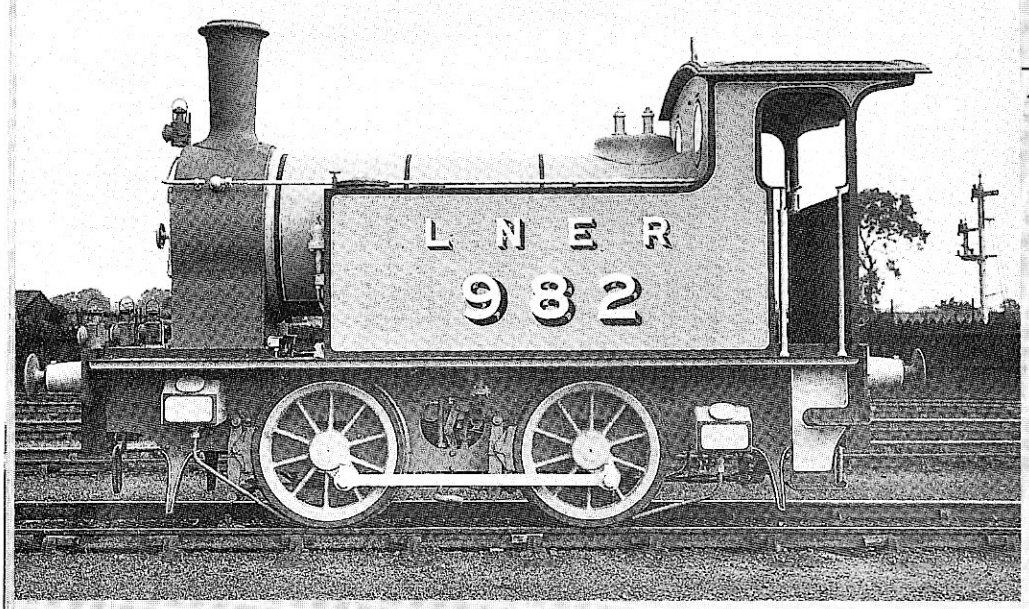
SCOTTISH REGION

CR 123. The long awaited official comeback after 23 years retirement of the Caley Single took place on 18th March when it worked a 2.00 pm Special consisting of BSK 3339 and BCK 7369, also resplendent in CR livery, from Perth to Edinburgh (Princes St) where arrival was at 3.56 pm. The train carried a party of English and overseas press representatives travelling to the city for a meeting on Festival matters.

The Perth crew, driver John Powrie and fireman David Meol were dressed in the appropriate manner, complete with beard and moustache respectively, and the guard also had full CR guard's dress. The veteran engine returned later in the afternoon to St Rollox works. The local press reports that the driver has no doubts on the engine's ability to run.

It is believed that 123 had done its trial running and found its way to Perth under cover of darkness.

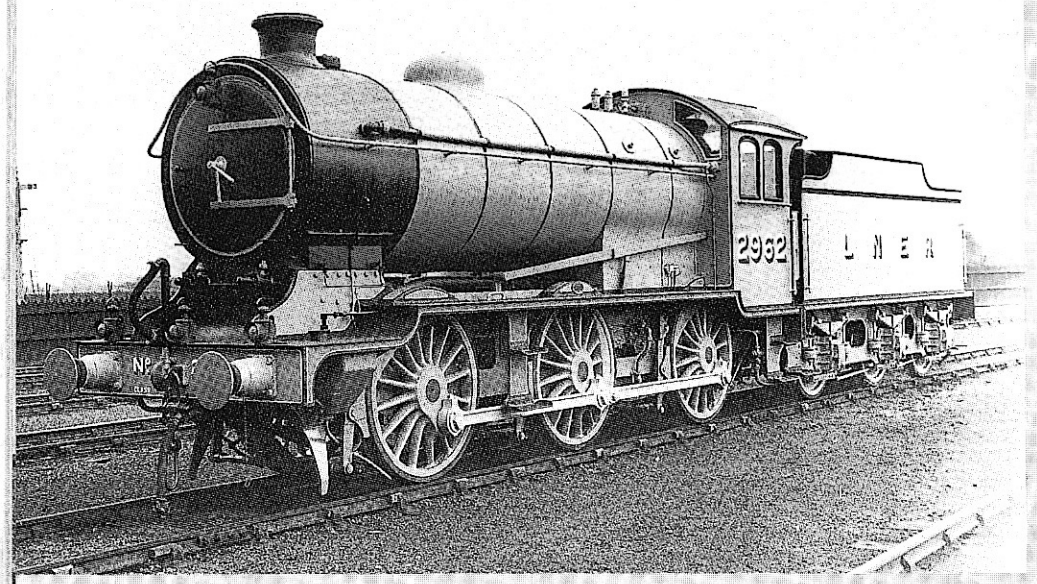
BATTERY RAILCAR. The two-car set has been making nocturnal trial runs on the Kelvin Valley line, but is expected to make its first public appearance on the Deeside line on 26th March.



◀ 982 was a North Eastern design perpetuated by the LNER and the first engine appeared in 1888, known as Class H and eventually becoming LNER Class Y7. The NER built 19 engines and the LNER built five more, 982-6, in 1923. Usually a ¾-rear view was taken of this engine to show the open back to the cab and the cab fittings. The engine carries four headlamps at the front, which was a favourite practice at Darlington, and they are of the NER pattern with an unprotected 'bull's eye' glass. The photograph, taken in the Paint Shop yard, shows the wooden fence in the background which separated the yard from the Darlington to Barnard Castle line. 982 was withdrawn from Tyne Dock shed in February 1947 as 8086.

A grey day
Darl

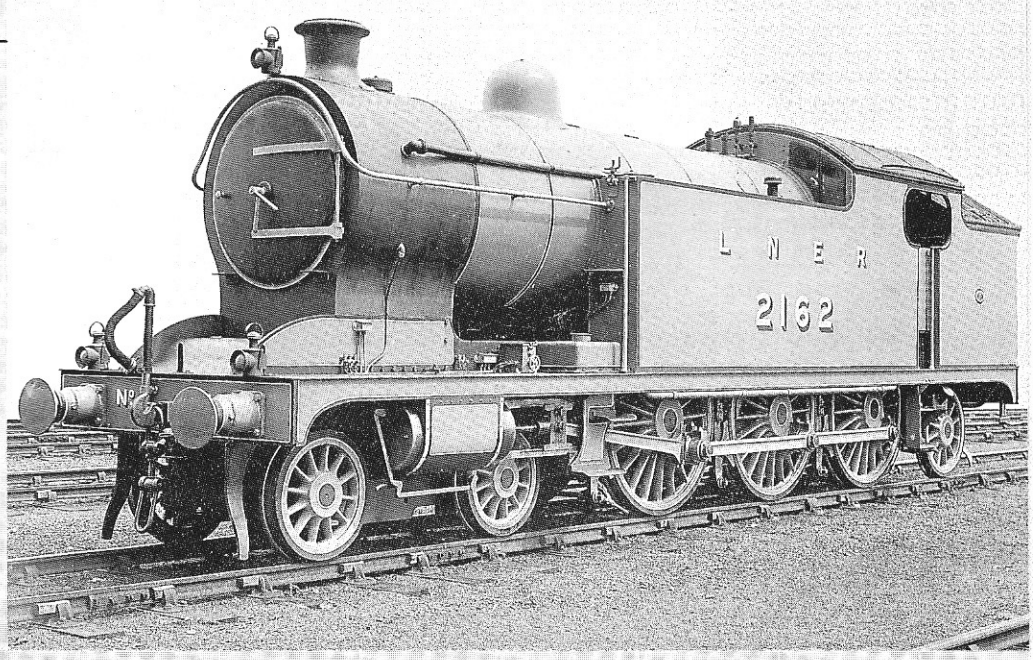
▼ Darlington Works started to build J39 0-6-0 engines in 1926 and built numerous batches totalling 206 engines until 1941. 2962 was the first of those built in 1931, photographed in the Paint Shop yard with four headlamps; the tender is of the 3,500 gallon type with straight sides. This engine was withdrawn in January 1961 as 64823.



The North Eastern Railway favoured photographing its new engines in 'shop-grey' or 'works-grey' livery, presumably because a better result was obtained with the early photographic plates and papers. However, some of the lining which appeared on engines in the grey livery was misleading if it did not appear when the engine was painted in its correct green or black livery. The LNER continued this practice, notably at North Road Works at Darlington, where the official Chief Mechanical Engineer's photographer was based, the usual location for the photographs being in the yard at the east end of the Stooperdale Paint Shop. Broadside and

The first of the new B1 class of 4-6-0, ▶ 8301 *Springbok*, appeared from Darlington in December 1942 after a special effort had been made to complete it in a short time in spite of the war; thus it was June 1943 before the second engine appeared as 8302 *Eland*. On the front end of the frames the engine carries the new pattern Worksplate adopted by Darlington earlier in the year, and the Works Number 1912 can easily be read.

There are signs of wartime measures, such as the N E on the tender in place of LNER, and the sheet-metal side 'windows'. The shopping date of 6/43 was carried in small characters above the cab-side number. This engine was withdrawn in September 1963 as 61001.



In 1931 a single example of the NER Class D (LNER H1) 4-4-4T was rebuilt as a 4-6-2T and classified A8. This engine was 2162, built in April 1914, and after tests from Middlesborough shed, working to Scarborough, and from Scarborough shed, working to Hull and York, the modification was found to be well worthwhile and the other 44 engines were converted to 4-6-2T between January 1933 and August 1936.

The photographer has changed his set of headlamps to the LNER pattern with the protected 'bull's eye'. Although the photograph was taken in the Paint Shop yard the background has been obliterated. 2162 eventually became 9869 and 69869 and was withdrawn from Thornaby shed in June 1960.

OFILE

at ington

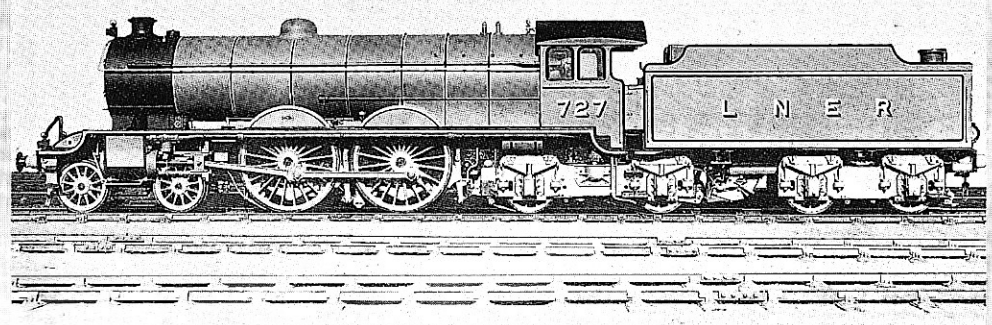
by KEN HOOLE

This short but typical contribution was received in our offices only a few days before we heard of the sad death of Ken Hoole. We publish it here in tribute to the memory of a dedicated historian whose scholorship will be sorely missed. Fortunately his knowledge lives on through his written word. Ed.

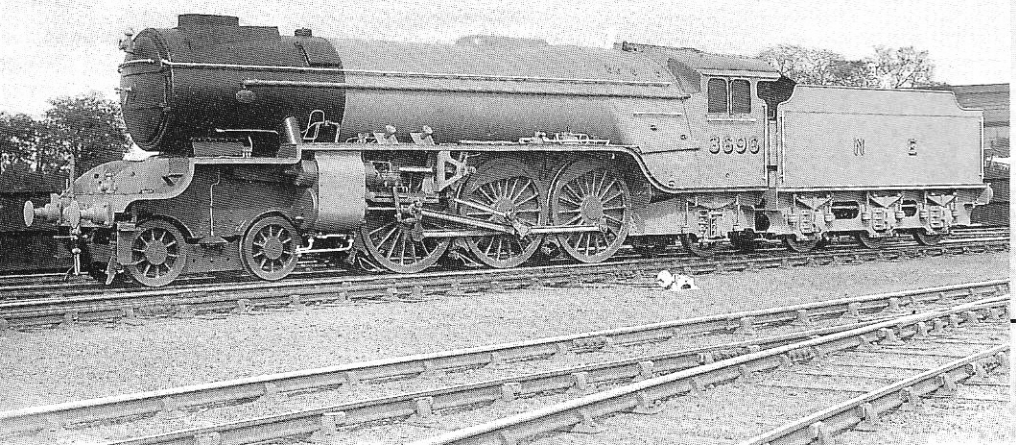
¾-front views were normally taken, and sometimes both sides of the engine were photographed, although the practice was to turn the engine on a nearby triangle rather than photograph the side of the engine facing north.

Postscript. My dictionary gives:- *Grey; of a neutral tone, intermediate between black and white, that has no hue and reflects and transmits only a little light.*

Certainly one has only to look at photographs of engines just out of the Paint Shop in spotless green livery to see the difficulties caused by the many reflections of light.



▼ An example of a broadside view in the yard, of one of the two ex-North Eastern Atlantics rebuilt to Class C9, with a booster fitted bogie under the rear end of the engine and the front of the tender. This was carried out in 1931 but was not a great success and the booster engine was removed after a few years, although the engine continued to run in its articulated form. On rebuilding, the engine retained its Raven fog signal apparatus, with the striker just ahead of the rear driving wheel, but the apparatus was taken out of use in 1933. 727 was withdrawn in January 1943 from Heaton shed.



◀ Class A2/1 3696 was photographed in exactly the same location in the Paint Shop yard as 8302; this was the first of four engines ordered as 2-6-2 but which appeared as 4-6-2 to Edward Thompson's designs. Note the cylinders set well back, and the double chimney, with smoke deflectors on top of the smokebox. This engine was turned out in May 1944, with Works Number 1930, and the plate has been affixed to the side of the smokebox; it subsequently became 60507 *Highland Chieftan*, **with an 8-wheel tender, and it was withdrawn in December 1960.**

Readers' Forum

TIME TO ADJUST THE CUT-OFF?

By way of introduction to our usual letter columns and the return of the book review section (missing from the last two issues), we thought we would raise a few matters which have been occupying our minds over the past few months, both before and after my assumption of responsibility. Nothing has been determined yet, but we want your views. We cannot publish all your letters nor reply to them individually, but all are read most carefully and the more we get the better we can gauge your views.

A feature of BACKTRACK is the promise of balanced contents in every issue. We want to refine this to reflect your wishes even more closely in terms of the importance you attach to the various ingredients in the package and how much (relative) space they should occupy. For instance, some reckon that there is too much branch line coverage; is this a common view? Do you prefer 'general' or more specific articles and should we give more space to 'How it works' themes? Are there enough readers' letters and book reviews? Do you want more pre-BR coverage or less? The list is endless, so please feel free to let us know.

Secondly, we would also like to know of any new ideas which you would like to see added to the list of themes if possible. Mr Peckitt's letter (below) is typical of what we would like to receive and one advantage of a more regular frequency is our greater ability to develop new ideas or offer longer or even multi-part features where a subject cannot be condensed to our normal length.

But of three things you can be sure: there will always be plenty of colour; as far as the 'real' railway is concerned we shall always let a reasonable period of time elapse before we consider any subject suitable for BACKTRACK, and we shall continue to steer clear of contemporary preservation issues.

David Jenkinson

STEAM TO KILLIN

I write to correct a surprising and rather elementary error which occurs in Malcolm Roughley's otherwise excellent article on the Killin Railway. Mr Roughley writes of the 'Glenmutchkin debacle' in a manner which would lead the reader to believe that it was a genuine speculative railway venture. The Glenmutchkin scheme was a burlesque/characature/satire on the flood of hair-brained railway speculation which occured during the "Railway Mania" of the mid-eighteen forties. The story first appeared in the October 1845 edition of Edinburgh's Blackwoods Magazine under the title *'How We Got Up The Glenmutchkin Railway and How We Go Out Of It'*. The author was Professor Aytoun, of Edinburgh University. His piece was so successful that it was taken up by other publications, being published in full in the Ayrshire Advertiser a few months after its original appearance. Forty years after its original publication the phrase 'Glenmutchkin line' was being used quite commonly.

The great joy of the piece is that throughout the rollicking farce that develops, the characters behave in a manner both human and timeless. The Good Professor indeed offered a general disclaimer to the effect that none of the characters in his story were based on real people such was speculation that arose around its first publication. John Thomas, who incorporates a short précis of the story at the beginning of his book *'The Callander and Oban Railway'* stated that Aytoun's tale was 'the most distinctive and one of the most significant pieces to come out of the Railway Mania.' I finish by quoting the last paragraph of the story:-

'Such is the accurate history of the Origin, Rise, Progress and Fall of the Direct Glenmutchkin Railway. It contains a great moral, if anybody has sense enough to see it; if not, I have a new project in my eye for next session...'

David Hamilton, Port Glasgow

SUBJECT BALANCE

I have just received the latest BACKTRACK and whilst your colour sections, photofile, technical section and Railway Observer piece are as good as always, it seems that you have not kept your normal subject balance: 20 pages on branches, 7 pages on Great Western.

This prompted me to check the subjects that you have so far covered. They are good and varied: Sheds, livery, coaches, tickets, tunnels, etc. So please keep up the mixture as you did in Vols.1 and 2.

Subjects for future covering:- activities at fairly large stations; car transportation by rail; Royal Mail and newspaper deliveries; refreshment rooms, etc.

D.A. Peckitt, Delmenville, S. Africa

HADLEY WOOD WIDENING

I want to say how much I enjoyed reading about the Hadley Wood track quadrupling in the latest issue of BACKTRACK. It took me back quite a few years as my parents lived at that time at Brookman's Park and father used the line daily to and from work in London and I can recall vividly the work involved. What I was rather surprised about was that nowhere was mention made of the serious accident in 1947 at Potters Bar — a triple one in fact — in which a local 'down' over-ran the buffers at Potters Bar, ran up the station slope and toppled over onto the fast line. Unfortunately, the fast Leeds express was due and crashed into the rear, and an 'up' express from Kings Cross crashed into the front of the wreckage. The scene was truly terrible. My father was in one of the coaches that fell into the path of the 'up' express. He had the shocking experience of seeing the driving wheels flash past him as it smashed open the carriage roof and the fire box, too. Two soldiers in the next compartment were killed and father was seriously injured. He was off work for 20 weeks.

I think it was at that point that the LNER pushed ahead with the plans for quadrupling so as to minimise such an accident occuring again, for it is quite true that running from four tracks into two did pose some problems. Sometimes it was the local which was held up at Potters Bar to allow a fast train to run through or an express being halted to allow a local to run through: all very inconvenient.

S. R. Davidge, Welwyn Garden City

SLIP COACHES

It was interesting to read V. R. Webster's letter in BACKTRACK, Winter 1988 Edition, about the slip-coach working on the Ravenglass & Eskdale Railway in the 1920s.

During 1923 I travelled on one of these trains, sitting in the rear of the coach next to the slip portion. The slip guard, who reminded me of a postal telegraph boy, pulled the pin out by means of a rope and then, presumably, reduced speed by a brake application. To my surprise he then leapt off his train and raced ahead and seconds after we cleared the point he threw them over allowing his following vehicle to leave the main line and come to rest at its appointed place.

Eric Shimmin, Derby

CANTERBURY & WHITSTABLE

I have read with interest the well illustrated article by Michael Page on the remains of the Canterbury & Whitstable Railway (BACKTRACK, Vol.3, No.1), and note his remarks about the remains of a "high culvert" (illustration 25) to which he can find no reference in earlier literature.

In a booklet published in 1980 by the Locomotive Club of Great Britain and written by R. L. Ratcliffe viz. *'The Canterbury & Whitstable Railway, 1830-1980: A Pictorial Survey'*, this feature is mentioned on p.10 therein and described both in the text and on the accompanying strip map as an "occupation arch".

B. S. Cooper, Lewes, E. Sussex

GREAT EASTERN

Mr Stanford Jacobs' article on the Great Eastern is most enjoyable and I don't want to carp, but the motive power material could have been improved. A quick perusal of the RCTS series *'Locomotives of the LNER'* reveals that the following information needs correcting:

p.5.	col.2	'The few foreigners' should include the N2 0-6-2Ts.
	col.3.	The D13s were rebuilds of GE Class T9, introduced in 1886, not the 1890s.
p.6.	col.1	7105 was F4 not F5; 7174 was also in the Cambridge area (Saffron Waldon then March) and 8123 was not the last G4. 8139 was and they both ended their days at March.
	col.2	It is not true that the March-Temple Mills coal traffic was handled only by steam braked locomotives with three-link couplings. All the J19s (including the J18 rebuilds) and J20s had exhaust steam ejectors and screw couplings and often worked fitted trains, goods and passenger.
	col.2	The two S1 0-8-4Ts (2798/9) were built to replace at Mexborough the two (6172/3) which had gone to March. When additional power was needed, Class O6s 5420/1 were used.
	col.3	The eight new O2s were 2954 to 2961.
p.7.	(pictures)	Top: 7232 is Class F4, not F5. Middle: F4 7233 is heading a quin-art not a quad-art set. Bottom: The G4 replacements were GNR C12 4-4-2Ts (4509/20/34); the NER G5s were push-pull replacements for GE F7 2-4-2Ts (and the far carriage is an ex-GER clerestory, less unusual of course).

On page 9, column 1, the surviving GN/GE joint service from Liverpool St was the 9.33 am (Sundays only) which was marked by the departure indicator on Platform 9 as 'Doncaster' — the only time in the week the word appeared. In column 2, the 'split down the middle' suburban stock was formed from ex-four wheel stock only. Whole trains were formed and stock of the same pattern built, the later versions with elliptical roofs.

Finally, in column 3, the C4(6083) transferred was for GN routes only and nothing to do with the GE. As for the J50s 'introduced about this time' (ie 1938), they had been part of the Temple Mills scene right through the 1930s.

Charles Bayes, Aldborough, Norwich

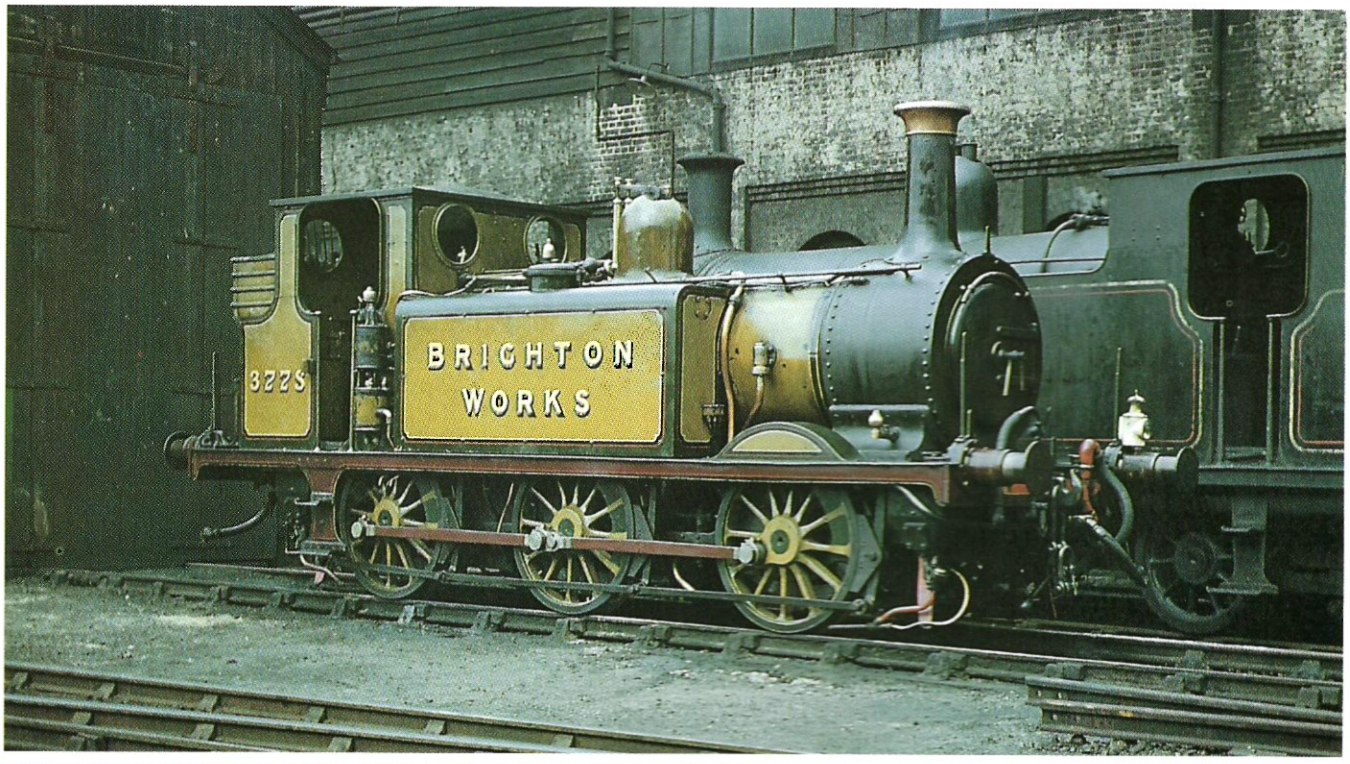
n.b. Mr Machon of Maidenhead also points out that Class B17 2822 (depicted on page 9) was *Alnwick Castle* not *Lambton Castle* as stated — *Ed.*

HENSTRIDGE S&D

Henstridge, the first station south of Templecombe, was remarkable in being the only S&DJR main line station not to have a passing loop, its platform, 150 ft long, also being the smallest. Note that there are two goods wagons in the siding, which closed in 1965, a year before passenger closure. It should be added that the little used Templecombe Lower and the 1928 SR halt at Stourpaine & Durweston were also single line platforms: a 4th July 1961 picture. Photos: R.C. Riley

SR DEPARTMENTAL 377s

From 1920 the Stroudley 'Terrier' 0-6-0T then 682, formerly *Boxhill*, became Brighton Works shunter, in SR days being given the departmental number 380s. In 1946, since it was largely in original condition it was withdrawn for preservation, the painting being carried out by Lancing Works. It seemed that a sufficient quantity of the Stroudley yellow ochre livery remained for its replacement also to be thus painted: 377s, originally No.35 *Mordern* in LBSCR days. In June 1947 this emerged from Lancing in the famous LBSCR livery and was recorded on Brighton shed as 377s on 23rd June 1956. Two years later it was repainted in a slightly darker mustard yellow, and with the closure of Brighton Works it returned to running stock in 1959 as 32635 retaining its special livery until withdrawal four years later.



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FRONT COVER: This superb portrait study at Llandudno Junction in June 1962 shows prototype Stanier LMS 4-6-2 46200 *The Princess Royal* **in the final BR red livery given to four members of this class (along with 16 'Duchesses') from c.1957 onwards. The engine had worked a Llandudno-bound special from Chester and while it turned at the Junction the train was taken to the terminus by two 2-6-4Ts.** Photo: Keith Pirt

BACK COVER: This evocative view, taken at mid-day during September 1962, shows former GWR *Small Prairie* **5569 at Coryton with a train to Plymouth on the old GWR Launceston branch to that city via Tavistock South.** Photo: D. Soggee

Atlantic